

**THE ROLE OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES  
IN RURAL AREAS  
IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to another university for a degree.

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DATE: 16 December 2001

## ABSTRACT

In April 1994, after South Africa's first democratic elections, a new era in education commenced. The education system was transformed to a unitary system and a programme of legislation was launched aimed at promoting democratic ideals and practices. Of particular importance to schools was the South African Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996) by which significant powers were granted to School Governing Bodies (SGBs) at local level. In addition to the school principal, a SGB was to be composed of elected representatives of four main stakeholder groups: educators, non-educator staff, learners (in Grade 8 or above) and parents. The powers and responsibilities allocated by the Act indicated that the introduction of SGBs had far-reaching potential to improve school effectiveness and, more importantly, to contribute to the growth of democracy in South Africa.

The writer of this study was an educator, resident in the Northern Province and with significant first-hand teaching experience in schools in rural and semi-rural areas of the province, as well as experience as a member of a SGB. This experience had made him keenly aware of the role that SGBs could play in improving schools with which he was familiar. The purpose of the research was therefore to investigate the role of SGBs in rural areas of the Northern Province.

To evaluate the role of SGBs, the researcher aimed to investigate aspects such as whether SGBs were in fact properly established, e.g. through the conduct of proper elections, how stakeholders perceived their roles, what functions were typically performed by SGBs, the perceptions of roleplayers about significant progress and or problems, and what needs for help or training were experienced. In particular the research aimed to discover whether there were particular needs associated with SGBs in the rural areas in order to determine what sort of capacity-building was required.

The approach used in the investigation followed four main steps. Firstly, a literature study provided the basis for analysis and clarification of important concepts. Secondly, the legal and policy context was described, paying particular attention to the specific legislation and documents that frame school governance in South Africa. Thirdly, the writer examined the context of Northern Province, describing four stages in the history of educational administration and focusing on rural communities in particular. The fourth perspective was gained by an empirical study of a sample of ten secondary schools in the rural and semi-rural areas around the town of Thohoyandou. The

method of investigation was to use questionnaires and interviews to obtain data from representatives of all five stakeholder groups in SGBs at each of these schools.

The findings led to the conclusion that SGBs were largely well-established in the rural areas of Northern Province. They were widely accepted as legitimate and worthwhile structures but there were specific important needs for training and capacity-building. Perhaps the most important finding was that parents in rural areas appear to find it very difficult to become involved in the educational life of schools and are especially reluctant to serve on SGBs. Reasons for this apparent apathy were found to lie in problems of illiteracy and feelings of ignorance or inferiority.

These conclusions enabled the researcher to make specific recommendations for improving the role and functioning of SGBs. Recommendations were made for improving the role of SGBs as a whole as well as for capacity-building relating to the needs of each stakeholder group. A particular emphasis of these recommendations was on ways in which the unique needs of rural communities can be met. This was seen as a priority in order to improve education in secondary schools in these historically underdeveloped areas and through that, promote the growth of democracy in the rural areas of Northern Province.



## OPSOMMING

Suid-Afrika se eerste demokratiese verkiesing op 26 April 1994 het 'n nuwe era vir die onderwys ingelei. Een unitêre en eenvormige geïntegreerde onderwysstelsel is gevestig en 'n program geloods van nuwe wetgewing gerig op die bevordering van demokratiese ideale en praktyke. Van besondere belangrikheid vir skole was die Suid-Afrikaanse Skolewet (Wet Nr 84 van 1996) wat bepaalde magte aan skole op plaaslike vlak afgewentel het deur die instelling van Skool Beheerliggame (SBLs). Saam met die skoolhoof, was SBLs saamgestel deur verkose verteenwoordigers van vier hoof belanghebbende groepe: opvoeders, nie-opvoederpersoneel, leerders (in Graad 8 of bo) en ouers. Die magte en verantwoordelikhede deur die Wet aan SBLs geallokeer was 'n aanduiding dat die instelling van SBLs verreikende potensiaal gehad het om skooldoeltreffendheid te bevorder sowel as 'n belangrike bydrae te maak tot die ontwikkeling van demokrasie in Suid-Afrika.

Die skrywer van die studie was 'n opvoeder, woonagtig in die Noordelike Provinsie en met eerstehandse ervaring van onderwys in skole in die landelike gebiede van die provinsie. Hy het ook ervaring gehad as lid van 'n SBL. Sy ondervinding het hom skerp bewus gemaak van die moontlike rol van SBLs in die verbetering en opheffing van skole waarmee hy vertrou was. Die doel van die navorsing was dus om die rol van SBLs in die landelike gebiede van die Noordelike Provinsie te ondersoek.

Om die rol van SBLs te evalueer het die navorser besluit om aspekte te ondersoek soos die vestiging van SBLs, bv. of hulle wel ordentlik gevestig was, o.a. deur die bepaalde verkiesingsprosedures, die persepsies van belanghebbendes oor hulle eie rolle, die tipiese funksies deur SBLs gerig, die rolspelers se eie persepsies van beduidende vordering en/of probleme in die funksionering van hulle SBLs, en enige opvallende behoeftes. Die navorsing het veral gepoog om agter te kom of daar spesifieke eiesoortige behoeftes t.o.v. SBLs in gemeenskappe in landelike gebiede was. Om sulke behoeftes te kon bepaal sou bydrae tot die ontwikkeling van geskikte programme vir kapasiteitsbou by SBLs in landelike gebied.

Die ondersoek het uit vier hoofstappe bestaan. Eerstens het 'n literatuurstudie bygedra tot die ontleding en verduideliking van belangrike konsepte. Tweedens is die wetlike en beleidskonteks beskryf, met besondere verwysing na die raamwerk van spesifieke wetgewing en dokumente wat skoolbeheer in Suid-Afrika bepaal. Derdens het die skrywer die konteks van Noordelike Provinsie

omskryf, insluitend 'n beskrywing van vier fases in die geskiedenis van onderwysbeheer. Daar is ook veral op die eienskappe van landelike gemeenskappe gefokus. Die vierde perpspektief was deur 'n empiriese ondersoek verkry, gebasseer op 'n seleksie van tien sekondêre skole in die landelike en semi-landelike gebied rondom Thohoyandou. Die ondersoek het gebruik gemaak van vraelyste en onderhoude met verteenwoordigers van elkeen van die belanghebbende groepe. Daardeur is gegewens bekom van al vyf belanghebbende groepe by elkeen van die tien skole.

Die bevindinge het tot die gevolgtrekking gelei dat SBLs reeds grootendeels gevestig was in die landelike gebiede van Noordelike Provinsie. Dit het geblyk dat SBLs wyd aanvaar was as legitieme instellings, maar dat daar spesifieke behoeftes was vir opleiding en kapasiteitsbou. Moontlik die belangrikste bevinding was dat ouers in die landelike gemeenskappe dit blykbaar baie moeilik vind om betrokke te raak in die opvoedingstaak en lewe van skole en veral skaam is om op SBLs te dien. Redes wat vir hierdie skynbaar apatetiese gedrag aangevoer is, was dat die meerderheid ouers ongeletterd is en dat gevoelens van onkundigheid, onbekwaamheid en minderwaardigheid ouers weerhou om deel te neem.

Bogenoemde gevolgtrekkings van die studie het die navorser in staat gestel om spesifieke aanbevelings te maak t.o.v. die ontwikkeling en verbetering van die funksionering van SBLs. Aanbevelings is gemaak om die rol van die SBL in die algemeen te verbeter, sowel as t.o.v. kapasiteitsbou gerig op die spesifieke behoeftes van bepaalde belanghebbende groepe. Die aanbevelings het in besonder klem laat val op die soeke na wyses waardeur die unieke behoeftes van landelike gemeenskappe aangespreek kan word. Hierdie behoefte word as 'n prioriteit beskou om onderwysverbetering in sekondêre skole in hierdie histories onderontwikkelde gebiede te versnel. Daardeur sou die ontwikkeling van demokrasie in die landelike gebiede van Noordelike Provinsie ook versterk en bevorder word.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to:

My Mother who has played the role of both mother and father to me, a role model, hard worker a motivator and, above all, a person whom I admire and love for her courage;

Petrus Tshifura, my late father, and Mashau Wilson Tshifura, my late brother, who were sources of inspiration in my life;

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTORY PERSPECTIVE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In April 1994, South Africa entered a new political era, based on a newly negotiated Interim Constitution and guided by principles of democracy. One challenge facing the new Government of National Unity (GNU) was to bring about a transformation in the education system, from one which had been heavily fragmented, racially discriminatory and widely experienced by the Black majority to be inferior and illegitimate, to one which would bring about equality and democracy.

Thus, from the outset of this new dispensation, change in the education system was regarded as part of the broader process of democratic transformation in South Africa. This spirit of democratisation, with its stress on rights, equality and participation, is present in all the new policy documents that appeared from 1994 onwards. As regards education, much of this was already captured in the Report of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1993), such as in the guiding principles of non-racism, non-sexism, democracy, a unitary system and redress (NEPI, 1993:51). The theme of democratic transformation also dominates the earliest policy documents on education of the GNU, e.g. the Department of Education's White Paper, *Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa: First Steps to Develop a New System* (RSA 1995a).

The idea of school governance is strongly present in the policy discourse for the new democratic dispensation as an essential part of democracy. This concept, namely that those affected should have power to influence the policy of their own schools, was present in the NEPI Report (1993) and was already taken up in Section 247 of the Interim Constitution in 1993 (RSA 1993). It also appears in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996 (RSA 1996c) and comes most clearly to full expression in the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996b).

The South African Schools Act introduced the idea of community involvement in school governance as a democratic right and responsibility. Although this right for participation had long been demanded as part of the democratic struggle, the requirement to elect and run school

governing bodies (SGBs) in all public schools of South Africa presented a huge challenge to many communities who were unprepared and inexperienced to take on such responsibilities. Especially in rural and underdeveloped areas, where many communities were largely illiterate or unemployed, the setting up of SGBs was a difficult and even contentious process.

In presenting this topic focused on the role of parents, educators and learners in school governance, I have sought to find answers to the needs I have experienced mainly in the context of public secondary schools in the Northern Province, the region in which I have taught for 14 years. Because the thesis seeks to draw strongly on first-hand experience, the research topic is confined mainly to secondary schools in the proximity of Thohoyandou. Thohoyandou was the capital of the former Republic of Venda, but is in close proximity to areas that fell within two former "homelands" during the apartheid era, namely the area of Segosese that fell in Lebowa and Malamulele that fell in Gazankulu. Today these areas all fall within the Northern Province of South Africa.

When it comes to school governance, the schools in this region appear similar in many respects to those in other rural or semi-rural and underdeveloped areas in our country. The problem of defining the role of school governing bodies applies to most of the schools in the Northern Province and probably even in the majority of schools in South Africa, since most lack prior experience of school governance and are set in relatively underdeveloped communities. It is therefore hoped that this study will clarify some problems in defining the role of SGBs. In this way the study may therefore contribute also, eventually, to finding ways in which SGBs can function more effectively, not only in my own region but elsewhere in South Africa among communities with a history of similar experiences.

South Africa is presently undergoing a process of change from the racially divided and fragmented apartheid system of education to a more democratic system of education. This process has been flooded with new regulations, bills, Acts of Parliament, commissions and reports. Already mentioned above and particularly important among these new acts is the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996b). This Act deals with the roles of the major stakeholders in the school: learners, parents, educators and non-educators as well as with the establishment and funding of both public and independent schools (RSA, 1996b:3-26). This Act also recognises the existence of school governing bodies as an expression of democratic governance at the level closest to the community and the need to include them in the decision-making process in public schools.

The effect of the new legislation is that schools should aim at establishing governance structures that will enable elected representatives of the four stakeholder groups to assume active and responsible roles in the determining and adoption of policies in schools. Parents, learners, educators and other personnel need to be represented in the management of public schools (RSA, 1996b:1). Clearly this is an expression of the intention that principals, learners, educators and parents not only be given a right to participate, but also that the institution of SGBs is intended to play a major role in ensuring that this country becomes more fully democratic. Their exclusion from these bodies would not only be contrary to the democratic ethos, but also against the law.

The process of including governing bodies in public schools has already started in all schools, from Cape Town to Messina. However, it should be noted that, in some regions or communities, a large proportion of parents at a particular school are likely to be semi-literate or even largely illiterate.

It must be noted that the majority of learners elected to governing bodies will be inexperienced minors. Parents, educators and principals in the governing bodies of public schools will therefore need to proceed with great sensitivity and responsibility in the election of governing bodies and formation of school policies and in establishing new working relationships within school governing bodies. Defining and redefining the roles of the different stakeholders is not straight-forward and can be something with which SGBs need help, especially since shared governance introduces a new balance of relationships into an educational setting. Respect for the status of the parents and status of the school management should remain as high as possible and care should be taken to ensure that the child's loyalty is not divided between the parental home and the school. Principals who try to exclude the involvement of the community in their schools risk undermining their own effectiveness and ultimately damaging the school as a whole. At the same time, principals and teachers cannot run the school effectively and successfully without the support of the parents or guardians.

Parents, learners and non-educators can all contribute a great deal towards the smooth running of the school. In this way potentially damaging actions such as strikes, whether organised by parents or children against principals and teachers, can be averted or eliminated. Educative teaching is achieved through the co-operation of parents, teachers, learners, principals and non-educators.

The interest that gave rise to this study was thus the challenging nature of the phase of innovation and adjustment that has been thrust onto South African schools by the new requirements of shared school governance. The focus of the study was on the role and functioning of SGBs in the area most familiar to the researcher, i.e. the rural and developing areas of the Northern Province.

## **1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM**

### **1.2.1 Background to the problem**

Firstly, it needs to be stated that the problems of instituting new democratically inspired policies, such as setting up SGBs, cannot be separated from the problems created by the history of large-scale underdevelopment in education, particularly for the Blacks in South Africa.

It is helpful first briefly to give this background to the problem before the specific research problem itself is described. In the year 1948 the National Party government came into power with a policy of white supremacy and racial differentiation as was clearly evident from the party's ensuing programme of racially based legislation. This became especially clear in the 1960s and 1970s, through the implementation of the policy of separate development or apartheid, most notably through seeking to separate Black South Africans into separate, semi-autonomous political "homelands".

Several statutes or laws were enacted to ensure that education conformed to this policy. It is on the basis of this racial restructuring that the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was introduced along with the Extension of University Education Act of 1959, the Coloured Persons Education Act of 1963, the Indian Education Act of 1965 and the National Education Act of 1967 (Nkomo, 1990:15-20). During the year 1976, the protest of parents, educators and learners against Bantu Education reached a climax when the Soweto riots put the demand for equal education for all citizens into the forefront of the overall democratic struggle.

The struggle for equal education continued from that year and it is still present today. In this process of struggle, learners, parents and educators were seen to be inseparable from the struggle for democratic rights for all and from the struggle for class emancipation (Alexander, 1990:26).

During these years of struggle for liberation and class emancipation, learners played a leading role, along with parents, teachers, principals and members of their communities. There was no way in which the government was going to regain the trust and the consent of the Black youth. The Coloureds, Indians and Blacks showed solidarity in their demand for what they termed as “people’s education”. Student representative councils of the aforementioned groups demanded free education, compulsory education, equal standards and equality through such student organisations as the Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) and the South African Students’ Organisation (SASO).

During the period from 1976 to 1979, numerous student and teacher organisations were formed. These movements were seen as some of the vehicles that facilitated change in the country. The Soweto-based National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was in the forefront. Against this background, it becomes clear that learners, parents and educators in South Africa played a major role in demanding the provision of the best possible education for pupils in the public schools. This demonstrates that there is a strongly established political expectation that parents and learners should participate in school decision-making. This also points to the fact that school governing bodies should incorporate these two constituencies and that parents and learners should participate in this way in the decision-making in any public secondary school.

In a very explicit way, therefore, in the context of the democratic struggle in South Africa, the idea of participative school governance was one of the first building blocks of the new democracy. Against this brief background explanation it is now the task of the researcher to state the problem of the research.

### **1.2.2 Statement of the problem**

The problem on which this research focused was that school governing bodies have been established formally and democratically in terms of new legislation, but that in practice they appear frequently not to be functioning effectively and that this malfunctioning is damaging to the potential educational success of schools overall.

Baloyi (1991:5-6) suggests that a short and clear way of formulating a research problem is to ask related questions expressed in the form of full sentences because they are possible preconditions for formulating a suitable hypothesis or for planning research procedures as well as for enthusiastic problem analysis and solution.

In this research, if there were to have been an overarching hypothesis, it would probably have been to state rather broadly and obviously that: *Improving the performance of SGBs is an essential step in improving overall school effectiveness in the Northern Province*. But as this research was more qualitative and interpretive, it did not set out to test any such hypothesis. School effectiveness, furthermore, is a large topic in itself and lies beyond the boundaries of this research. It does nevertheless express a useful general and implicitly understandable goal, that also invites a number of questions of the type envisaged above by Baloyi. For example, according to Section 16(1) in the SA Schools Act, the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body. The main question relating to this fact is “Can secondary schools in the Northern Province be run effectively without the participation of a properly functioning school governing body?” Related questions that can be derived from such a key question include the following:

- (a) What are the intended respective roles of educators, learners and principals in SGBs?
- (b) How do the respective stakeholders perceive their own roles and responsibilities?
- (c) What evidence can be obtained from schools in the Northern Province to reveal how SGBs in a given area function?
- (d) What functions are suggested by policy documents as the most important for SGBs and how are these functions understood and fulfilled by actual stakeholders?
- (e) How often do parents, learners and teachers hold school governing body meetings?
- (f) How can principals and educators help the school governing bodies in public schools to function more effectively?
- (g) Who is best equipped to take the responsibility to give workshops to school governing bodies in the Northern Province region on themes such as the role of learners, parents, educators and non-educators?

Questions such as these can be summed up in the overarching question implied in the title of this research report, namely: What is the role of SGBs in the Northern Province, as deduced from a study of selected schools in that region?

To answer this, the investigation clearly needed to look at both a theoretical ideal of school governance, especially as framed by legislation in the South African context, as well as to establish some empirical evidence of how SGBs were functioning in practice in the focus area of the study.



### **1.3 AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of this research was to investigate the role of SGBs in rural areas, especially in the Northern Province, to establish what the perceptions of different stakeholders are and how they carry out their expected functions and responsibilities. A significant purpose of this research was to identify those problems that could help policy makers, education departments and even SGBs themselves to develop guidelines for more effective governance and educational management practice. Through this process, the study might ultimately help to promote a healthy relationship between school and community in public secondary schools in the Northern Province.

The specific aims of the research were:

- (a) to identify and evaluate problems that currently occur in SGBs;
- (b) to provide suggestions that will help improve stakeholders' involvement in the school activities;
- (c) to make suggestions that enhance communication amongst learners, educators, parents and principals in the public secondary schools and reduce the barriers to healthy, more open community-school relationships;
- (d) to make parents, learners, educators and non-educators aware of the South African Schools Act, especially of Sections 18, 19, 20 and 21, which relate to the functioning of governing bodies;
- (e) to indicate how Learner Representative Councils (LRCs), educators and parents interpret the South African Schools Act;
- (f) to establish what role SGBs in the rural areas of the Northern Province can play in meeting the vision of the SA Schools Act for democratic, participative school governance.

### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Research on this topic is very important and relevant to South Africa for the following reasons. The South African education system has been undergoing rapid change since the attainment of democratic rights for all in 1994. It is imperative that stakeholders, both outside and inside the

schools, become fully involved in changing the old system. The members of the school governing bodies indicated above expect to be part of this change.

This study examined the role of the stakeholders in the management and administration of their schools. As will be shown, the study strongly suggested that most of the head teachers in public secondary schools in the Northern Province would be assisted significantly by school governing bodies becoming more proactive and effective in their school management. For example, problems which de-motivate parents from attending meetings, raising funds or paying towards school funds (i.e. school fees) could be eliminated or greatly reduced by the establishment of effective school governing bodies in all public secondary schools in the Northern Province.

Similarly, greater community participation in setting goals and in decision making could produce strong support for the entire educational programme of schools and give real expression to broadening the ideal of democratic development.

As has been suggested above, school governance is an opportunity to practise and expand democracy. In the very largest sense, failure to achieve a workable participative form of governance at local school level will be a negative advertisement and a setback for democracy where it most needs to be nurtured, i.e. at the level of the grassroots community.

## **1.5 THE FOCUS INTENDED BY THE TITLE**

The purpose of this section is to explain the choice of the three key concepts in the title, namely the focus on governance or *governing bodies*, the use of the term *rural areas*, and the regional designation of *Northern Province*.

The primary emphasis intended by the title was on the role of governing bodies. This was against the background of the implementation of a new system of school governance arising out of the South African Schools Act (RSA 1996b) since the beginning of 1997. From his experience as an educator, the researcher has observed that in many instances - particularly in his own context of schools in the Northern Province - schools have experienced difficulties in implementing new policies of setting up school governance. This problem is of widespread interest throughout South Africa as it affects all public schools in the country.



For this researcher, however, his personal location as an educator in a specific region of the Northern Province guided him to choose a focus which would enable him to make an ongoing contribution to the development of the schools among which he works. The overriding characteristic of these schools is that, relative to those in established urban areas of South Africa, they are all underdeveloped and surrounded by largely rural communities. There is, in the researcher's view, very little significant difference between the patterns and problems found in the schools in the "deep rural" areas of this region and those in the still basically rural context of the town of Thohoyandou. The area is one where the majority community comprises Blacks who are still mostly illiterate and unemployed. Many have only recently moved to the "urban" environment of Thohoyandou and are therefore, for the purposes of this study, broadly characterised as being part of a rural context.

The main significance implied by this grouping was to reflect that in underdeveloped ("rural") communities, problems and inexperience occur which are different to those found in more typically urban contexts where there have been a longer history of development, support structures and greater opportunities for training and cross-pollination of experience. In this study "rural" has been loosely used to include the idea of underdevelopment. This categorisation tends therefore to be more descriptive of a cultural orientation or life experience than of an exact geographical location.

In developed countries, the problems of rural education essentially are problems of ensuring that people living in remote and sparsely populated areas have the same access to education as those living in the towns and cities. In this study the researcher turned his attention to areas that were definitely underdeveloped in this sense, such as schools in the rural areas of Mangondi village, Ha-Mutele, Ha-Lambani, Tshidzini and Duvhuledza. Such schools have often been regarded as inferior by their own communities. For example, teachers themselves have often regarded posting to rural schools as a disadvantage. For teachers in rural areas like these, learning by correspondence has been the only affordable means of obtaining knowledge. In the Northern Province rural students were encouraged to imitate urban/suburban educational models. Professionally, teaching assignments to rural schools were often viewed with disdain. These schools were seen as way stations where bright young educators had to put in their time before receiving choice assignments in the urban areas, as places for untrained teachers or as dumping grounds for old educators who had either proved incompetent or fallen out of favour with their supervisors. In physical terms, many rural schools were allowed to fall into disrepair and their material resources to become more and more meagre in comparison to metropolitan schools.

Politically, rural education also fell into a measure of disrepute. National bureaucracies have behaved as if quality education should not be wasted on children in sparsely populated areas and as if second-rate schooling was good enough for their rural constituents (Jonathan 1981:4). People who were physically isolated by virtue of living in rural areas often come to feel psychologically and politically isolated as well.

In addition, many rural parents in the Northern Province have become apathetic towards their children's education. In the rural areas one might find that most of the school governing body members are literate or educated. But in contrast, many rural parents have no interest in the education of their children while urban parents do have interest in the education of their children. Rural schools then are often lacking in that vital educational component of parental support and involvement, both directly in the school's programme and indirectly through their support of their children.

A further delineation that must be clarified is the reference in the title to Northern Province. The researcher intended the findings of this study to be broadly representative of the experience of schools in the rural areas of the Northern Province as a whole.

Northern Province consists of an amalgamation of three entities previously separate under the political design of apartheid based on ethnic groupings: Venda, a former "independent republic"; Lebowa, a former homeland; and Gazankulu, also a former homeland. The schools included in this study were drawn from an area in and around the town of Thohoyandou, previously the capital of Venda.

The ten schools included were from Region 3, a school district set up in terms of the post 1994 consolidation of Northern Province and incorporating schools from all three of the former entities described above. It may well be that the existence of inherited differences in educational quality or management capacity could be demonstrated between schools, depending on the former department under which they were administered. Since the restructuring of 1994, however, schools in Region 3 have interacted in one area and currently function within the same administrative framework. The researcher therefore felt justified in taking the selection of schools from Region 3 as being suitably representative for a study of schools in rural areas of Northern Province as a whole.

## 1.6 METHOD OF RESEARCH AND SEQUENCE OF CHAPTERS

The aim of the research was to investigate the role of SGBs in rural areas, especially in the Northern Province. In particular, the research aimed at the following:

- to clarify what role and functions were intended for SGBs by the post 1994 policy frameworks;
- to discover how these roles were understood and practised in schools in an area of Northern Province; and
- to make recommendations on how SGBs could be improved to contribute to better school governance, more effective schools and the growth of participative democracy at community level.

To achieve this, the research was divided into four main stages of investigation. These stages also determined the sequence of the next four chapters of the report.

**Conceptual clarification** (Chapter 2): The first step was to obtain conceptual clarity about key concepts upon which the research rested. Through a brief general literature study, Chapter 2 was devoted to this stage of conceptual analysis. Central concepts were identified and described. The concept of *school governance* led to identifying, on the one hand, concepts relating the distribution and exercise of power, such as *democracy*, *participation* and *governance* in general, as well as related concepts such as *stakeholders* and *school governing bodies* (SGBs). The context of school governance demanded attention to concepts such as *school*, especially *public secondary schools*, *learners*, *school community* and *school management*. Finally the specific focus on selected schools in the Northern Province necessitated discussion of the relevance of the concepts *rural schools* and *rural development*.

**Policy analysis and contextualisation** (Chapter 3): The next step was to clarify the legal and policy framework which had given rise to the institution of SGBs and which largely defined the theoretical roles and functions of SGBs. The primary focus of this exercise was on (a) the values shaped by the South African Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996c) and (b) the provisions of the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b).

**Description of the rural areas of Northern Province** (Chapter 4): As the particular context of implementation of school governance policies, the focus shifted to the Northern Province,

identifying very briefly the historical background of predominantly Black rural areas in South Africa. The development of education in the region was divided into historical stages that reflected the changing patterns of political control, from separate development up to the present new dispensation of a provincial system under one department for all at national level.

**Empirical investigation of the role and functioning of SGBs in selected schools (Chapter5):**

This stage of the research used the researcher's own empirical investigation of ten schools in Region 3 of Northern Province. To obtain data on the role and functioning of SGBs at these schools, structured interviews were conducted, using questionnaires (See Appendix A). At each of the ten schools, two representatives were interviewed from each of the four main stakeholder groups defined in the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b:Sections 23(1) and (2)), i.e. parents, educators, non-educators and learners. In addition, the principal of each school was interviewed as an *ex officio* member of the SGB. The parent representatives that were interviewed included the chairpersons of eight of the ten SGBs. This grouping into stakeholder categories allowed for the views of participants to be compared and related more meaningfully with the research questions in section 1.2.2 above (See also Anderson, 1990: 241-242 and Botha and Engelbrecht, 1992: 58-62).

The interview protocol followed two stages, first a face-to-face structured interview, using the ten items listed in the schedule given in Appendix A. This was a more in-depth stage of the interview. The second phase of the interview was shorter and without discussion. Each interviewee was asked to fill out the items in the schedule given in Appendix B, almost all requiring 'Yes/No' responses. This was essentially a qualitative approach but combined both open-ended and specific responses that at the same time provided a diversity of data and nevertheless yielded more specific responses that could be compared (Le Compte and Preissel, 1993:39-41).

The data collected in the interviews was then reported and analysed, leading to a critical reflection comparing the findings of actual reported practices about the role of SGBs with the possible roles intended by the policy frameworks. In the light of this comparison, the potential for training and development of SGBs was also reviewed.

Because of the strong reliance on conceptual analysis and the writer's own role as interpreter of the data against the background of personal knowledge of the context, the method of research in this study can be described as predominantly hermeneutic.

The final chapter (Chapter 6) summarised the findings of the above four facets of the investigation, presented conclusions in response to the original research questions and made recommendations for improving the functioning of SGBS. The study concluded with suggestions for further research aimed at improving the role of SGBs.

## **1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

This research was conducted as part of a Masters programme at the University of Stellenbosch. The researcher was resident in the Thohoyandou area of Northern Province, employed full time as an educator in a secondary school. He was therefore able to have only limited contact with the University. Distance, time constraints and limited resources, especially finance, dictated that the research be contained within relatively modest logistical and methodological boundaries.

These conditions shaped the research in the following ways, among others:

- ❑ A limited sample of ten schools was included for interviews.
- ❑ These schools were restricted to the area in and around Thohoyandou, i.e. within reasonable access for the researcher.
- ❑ The research had to be conducted over a relatively short time span. The literature and document study as well as the field work were dealt with mainly in the second half of 1999. This means that the findings and insights contained in the research arise from sources and information confined within the time frame of the investigation. The report thus does not include reference to subsequent developments, such as significant initiatives at capacity building of governing bodies by both departmental and non government organisations (e.g. the very effective thrust of the "whole schools" approach).
- ❑ There was limited opportunity for an extensive literature survey. The decision was made to restrict the research focus in three directions: firstly, a conceptual analysis of governance (within the broader framework of participative democracy in post 1994 South Africa); secondly, identification of key documents and the relevant policy framework; and thirdly, empirical investigation and qualitative interpretation of material about school governance practices obtained by means of a limited number of interviews.

The following experiences should also be mentioned as having a bearing on the method: some interviewees, especially principals, were reluctant to accept the interviewer before some free

discussion had taken place. The reluctance could have stemmed from the respondent associating the interviews with inspection of some kind, especially since the interviews took place in the offices of the respective interviewees.

## **1.8 SUMMARY**

In this introductory chapter, the importance of the research topic was highlighted. School governance was a significant part of the democratic transformation of South Africa. Following the democratic elections of April 1994 and legislation such as the South African Schools Act of 1996 (RSA, 1996b) it was clear that school governance is intended to be part of an overall policy environment which nourishes and develops democratic values and practices.

Against this background of opportunity, however, it was noted that inexperience, uncertainty and even ignorance have hindered SGBs in performing the roles effectively. This was a particular problem in schools in the region with which the researcher was familiar as an educator in public secondary schools, namely in Region 3 of Northern Province. Based on his observations, the researcher argued that confusion about the role and functioning of SGBs appeared widespread in other areas in Northern Province, and possibly elsewhere in the country. It was significant to the researcher that these regions were largely rural and underdeveloped in character. This influenced him to frame his research questions around the problem of investigating the role of SGBs in the rural areas of Northern Province.

The chapter therefore proceeded systematically to give a full description of the problem to be researched and to formulate relevant research questions. A statement of the aims of the research followed next. The aim was mainly to clarify the roles of SGBs and identify areas of confusion or ignorance among members of SGBs in this regard. Such clarification would enable the researcher to suggest ways of improving the effectiveness of SGBs.

To highlight the significance of the study, it was emphasised that failure to achieve workable participative forms of governance through SGBs would be a setback for the development of democracy overall, especially at the local level of the school community.

The scope and limitations of the research were outlined. Next, attention was drawn to the specific focus of the research by explaining the choice of the three main facets contained in the title: SGBs, rural areas and the Northern Province.

Finally the method of research was set out as follows: the first step was conceptual clarification with the help of a limited literature study. Key concepts were identified and defined, ranging from democracy and participation to stakeholders, schools, school governance and school management. Conceptual analysis prepared the way for an examination of the policy frameworks that determine the role of SGBs. The third stage in the method was to describe the actual educational context in which the researcher carried out the investigation, i.e. the context of Northern Province, especially the rural nature of that area. The final stage of the investigation was an empirical study in Region 3 of Northern Province based on questionnaires and structured interviews with members of SGBs drawn from the five main stakeholder groups at ten schools.

In the next chapter, the report turns therefore to the identification and discussion of key concepts relevant to the study of SGBs in the rural areas of Northern Province.



## CHAPTER 2

### ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT CONCEPTS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out to identify and define key concepts relating to school governance, against the background of democratic transformation in South Africa as a whole and in the education system in particular.

A brief survey of international sources contributes perspectives on these key concepts. The primary source of definition, however, needs to be sought in the ways in which concepts of democracy and transformation, governance and participation have been used and understood in the South African struggle to change the previously unequal and authoritarian society. Here reports and policy documents are among the most helpful sources.

Since the early 1990s, the education policy discourse, articulated and focused perhaps most strongly in the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) (NEPI, 1993) played a proactive role in advocating democratic school governance. The 1994 elections brought to an end the apartheid era and a Government of National Unity was sworn in. This fledgling government, based on the principles of democracy, equity and redress, was determined to ensure that all structures in South African society (political, economic, social and educational) should reflect these same principles.

A direct consequence of the beginning of a democratically elected political dispensation was the thorough-going review of all structures of governance at all levels. Among the first to receive attention was the system of control of schools. School governance, the focus of this research, was to be restructured in keeping with democratic principles to ensure representation, participation and ownership by all stakeholders within the school community.

The first step was to bring schools in previously separate departments into a single provincial department for all of the population in the region. As an illustration of the process of restructuring, it may be mentioned that the Northern Province inherited seven separate education



departments previously structured along racial lines as part of the apartheid blueprint for separate development (NEPI, 1992:7-9). These seven departments were administered respectively by the following former authorities:

- ❑ House of Assembly (HOA), that controlled schools for the White population group;
- ❑ House of Representatives (HOR), that controlled schools for the Coloured population group;
- ❑ House of Delegates (HOD), that controlled schools for the Indian population group;
- ❑ The Republic of Venda;
- ❑ The homeland government of Gazankulu;
- ❑ The homeland government of Lebowa;
- ❑ Department of Education and Training (DET), that controlled education for Blacks not included in one of the above three independent or homeland entities.

In one step, what were almost like seven separate education systems had to be integrated into one regional (provincial) department!

Although each former department had had its own school ownership, governance and funding structures, the Department of National Education (DNE) determined norms and standards of governance for the whole country. Three types of governance structures predominated at school level. These were school committees or management councils, governing bodies, Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). They provided the major stakeholders, *viz.* the community, parents, teachers and pupils (learners), with the opportunity to introduce participatory and representative governance in schools (Sayed and Carrim, 1997:91).

There was a clear shift of emphasis in the new policy directions. In all the school structures in South Africa, the declared intention was that role-players should enjoy much greater autonomy and power to influence school policy. The State took overall responsibility for all public schools. The State would provide teachers' salaries, while in all public schools governing bodies were to be elected by stakeholder groups. These governing bodies to be were responsible for the maintenance of their school facilities, and were empowered by law to determine school policy in matters such as admissions and language policies. They were also given the status of a legal person and had fiscal and legal powers (RSA, 1996b:1-7).

The policy shift described above was profound, both in the new values that motivated it and in the transformation that this vision implied for the existing system. At the heart of this

transformation was the motivating value or vision of democracy. As the root source of the current transformation of the education system, therefore, *democracy* is the first important concept that this chapter attempts to clarify. The discussion of this concept is inseparable from reference to the whole process of change and *transformation* in South Africa.

Democracy involves a redistribution of power, i.e. a change in the ways that social institutions such as schools are controlled. Since the term *governance* appears to be the term that has become most widely used to capture the concept of control within a social environment, an analysis of this concept will follow the section on democracy. This discussion also guides the study towards a closer understanding of *school governance*, and prepares the way for a closer definition of the related concept of *school governing bodies*.

The transformation of governance structures in line with democratic principles points the discussion towards notions of participative democracy and partnerships in governance. The chapter therefore moves on to analyse *participation* as an essential expression of democratic governance. This raises the need to identify and clarify relevant *stakeholders*.

Thereafter a section of short definitions follows, outlining concepts that need to be understood in relation to school governance. These are the concepts *learner*, *public school*, *school governing body*, *parent*, *educator* and *school community*.

The second last section of the chapter briefly refers to the possible confusion between the concepts of school governance and *school management* and attempts to clarify the difference between these two functions as well as how they interface.

The final section of the chapter focuses on the emphasis in this study on schools in rural areas, highlighting some important characteristics of *schooling in rural areas* and the developmental needs in these areas.

## **2.2 DEMOCRACY AND TRANSFORMATION**

Democracy is widely accepted as the goal of all the major policies of South Africa since the elections of April 1994, as encapsulated in the new Constitution of the RSA and Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996c).

A full discussion of the origins and nature of democracy is beyond the scope of this study. It is also not intended to examine in detail the history of the so-called mass democratic struggle in South Africa. It is enough to say that all major policy documents that have influenced current legislation affecting schooling, including school governance, take democracy as the departure point. This is made clear, for example, in the opening pages of the NEPI Framework Report (1993:1-15), in the first post-1994 education White Paper, *Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa. First Steps to Develop a New System* (RSA, 1995a:2 and 8-14), in the preamble to the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b:3) and in countless other documents.

The recurring theme is of the transformation of the education system as part of the larger process of transforming South African society as a whole. Makgoba (1996:183-184) points out that transformation is an active process whereby the form, shape or nature of something is completely changed or altered, i.e. a blueprint. Transformation therefore involves change that is radical and far-reaching in every way, from the underlying principles and values to the structure and organisation, and to the purpose and effect. For South African education, this is to be achieved by changing every aspect of the system: the values that underpin it; the contents and methods of the curriculum; and the structures of control (or governance) and delivery. This includes giving access and ownership of schools to those previously excluded (Taylor, 1998a: 10).

In general terms, the two main values more or less universally accepted as central to democracy are liberty or freedom (usually expressed in rights of the individual) and equality (usually expressed in terms of the reduction of inequalities rather than in absolute standards) (Bullock and Stallybrass, 1977:161). South African society, however, has a particular historical legacy. Prominent features have been: a divided and unequal society, racial discrimination, neglect of Black education and traditionally an inferior role given to women (Taylor 1998a: 17). It is not surprising, therefore, that in the attempt to identify how democratic transformation should take place in this country, the following values have been distilled in public discourses. These were first formulated explicitly in this form in the NEPI Framework Report (1993:51) but have since become established as the criteria which most public policies take as their departure point:

- ❑ non-racism;
- ❑ non-sexism;
- ❑ democracy;
- ❑ a unitary system;
- ❑ redress.

In the constitutional sense, democracy is a form of government organised in accordance with the principle of sovereignty, political equality, popular consultation and majority rule (Ranney, in Deem and Brehony, 1995:12). Within such a society or dispensation, democratic education is also characterised by similar principles of equality and participation. It is, according to Deem and Brehony (1995:13), the education of children and youth planned co-operatively and in a principled way by parents, professional educators, students and citizens. In brief, it is a democratically planned education. In the view of these writers, what makes it democratic is the countervailing influences within and among the overlapping stakeholders' roles (parents, professionals and citizens) combined with a morally principled approach to decision making.

But democratic education is not only to do with the way in which the education system is governed or decisions made. It is also to do with the values, processes and practices that shape the day-to-day experience of those within the system. Gutmann (1987:23) also tries to get to grips with these essential values that imbue democratic education. He has called these principles non-discrimination and non-repression. For Gutmann, democratic education is aimed at preparing children and youth for a life of civil self-governance. It is aimed at popular sovereign rule by the citizens as opposed to rule by a monarch or elites. Its aim is to create citizens who are competent to share in the rights and obligations of ruling. All education partnerships represent the collective activities of the various participating institutions with the object of improving the quality of education that is provided. Gutmann's ideal is that each participating member makes a contribution according to its own unique nature and ability (1987:24).

Gutmann's point is that school is both a stage of preparation for society and a piece of society itself. The school performs an educative role over a wide area. In the normal course of its activities it educates the child in its totality. Education is an essential human function within any society. The way that schools are organised and run and the relationships that are formed can teach children that democracy is a form of society in which men and women may gain confidence in themselves and in their fellow human beings and thus move from force to persuasion, from restriction to liberty and from blind obedience to creative effort (Smith, 1995:2).

Similarly, in their book *Education for Democracy*, Steyn, Du Plessis and De Klerk (1997:139) assert that in a democratic society, freedom, rights and opportunities are meant for everybody. Every participant in the education of a child should be provided with sufficient and reasonable

opportunities. They see the development of the teaching and education system as a vitally important part of a democratic culture.

The above perspectives establish the cardinal role of education as part of the development of democracy. It is clear that access to education, and with that the right to participate in the decisions that shape the education system, have become cornerstones of modern democracy. By the end of the Twentieth Century it has become a widely accepted belief, especially in the developed world, that everybody has a right to basic education as well as to have access to secondary and higher education. As part of the expansion of democratic values worldwide, children's rights have become the theme of international charters (Taylor, 1998a:20). It is held that the child has a right to human dignity and equal opportunities, and that there should be no discrimination on the grounds of culture, gender or race. The rights of the child are important and were even included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations Organisation on 10 December 1948 (UNO, 1948).

In the final analysis, democracy is to do with the members of civil society having a decisive share in the way they are ruled. It is a system of which it can be said that the whole people, positively or negatively make, and are entitled to make, the basic determining decisions on important matters of public policy (Holden, 1974:8). A crucial question is how "the whole people" can be given this opportunity. How do all the members of a society or organisation share power? Cloete (1993:7-10) points to one way in which this can be achieved when he defines participatory democracy. This he sees as direct democracy, but concedes that all citizens will not take part in the final decision making, although they will be allowed to submit their views directly to the final decision makers, who could be elected representatives. Pateman (1970:41) also emphasises the participatory nature of democracy, stressing that it is built around the central assertion that individuals and their institutions cannot be considered in isolation from one another.

All of the above is built on the underlying value attached to the individual and his or her freedom or right to a significant degree of self-determination within society. One of the strongest reasons advanced for participatory democracy relates to this value attached to freedom. This is the assertion, made for example by Botes (1996:11), that taking part in the decisions that affect one contributes to the actual happiness and wellbeing of individuals. According to Botes, fostering democracy thus involves the creation of conditions whereby and according to which the individual will be able to achieve the greatest degree of individual wellbeing, provided he or she

abides by the law. The role of the law, too, is particularly valued by democracy as it creates and protects the freedoms and rights of individuals. Democracy insists on the due process of law, which means that the law has to be equally, fairly and consistently enforced (McQuoid-Mason, 1994:15-19).

A clear implication of this in relation to this study on school governance is that even at the level of the local school, SGBs should be seen to be acting equally, fairly and consistently. This they can do when, firstly, they are seen to uphold the law and to operate transparently within the scope of relevant legislation, such as the SA Schools Act. Secondly, their role can be made more democratic when they actively make use of the policy process in their exercise of governance, for example by involving stakeholders in a participative process of policy formulation and implementation.

This discussion of democracy makes it essential to examine three further concepts that are intrinsically part of democracy and vitally important to this study. This will be done in Sections 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 below. The first is the general concept of *governance*, which is to do with how power is exercised, including the application of this concept to schools in particular. The second key concept, much stressed by the writers above, is *participation*. Thirdly, arising out of the question of participation is the need to define who has or which groups have a right or an interest to participate, i.e. who are the legitimate *stakeholders*.

## 2.3 GOVERNANCE

The purpose of this section is to reach an understanding of the terms governance, school governance and school governing body as well as of the relationship between them.

Governance is a noun that denotes the act, manner, fact, or function, of governing, i.e. of ruling with authority, and conducting the policy actions and affairs of a particular constituency. It is the action of holding sway and controlling (Fowler and Fowler, 1951:522). According to the New Shorter Oxford Dictionary (Brown, 1993:675) "governance" basically has to do with authority, controlling, influencing, regulating and directing. Governance is thus closely linked to concepts such as power, legitimacy and authority. Coulter (1981:4-6) defines these terms as follows:

Power: The capacity to cause a thing to happen that would not happen without that capacity.



Legitimacy: The popular perception of a justifiable and acceptable use of public power.

Authority: The right to use public power deemed to be legitimate.

Monahan (1982:267) expands on this by showing that authority is not just imposed but has to do with the attitude of those over whom it is exercised. He states that authority is customarily understood as the quality that secures obedience from a specific group of people. Bauman (1996:19) notes that governance is not only exercised through formal systems but often includes informal procedures for controlling and managing people in organisations.

Other writers such as Sergiovanni (1987:xiii) pick up the theme of control and authority as central characteristics of governance. Giving a macro perspective, Sergiovanni states that educational governance is concerned with the organisation and machinery through which political units such as federal agencies, state departments and local school districts exercise authority, laws and customs that are the basis of the performance of administrative functions and responsibilities. Gold and Evans (1998:25) see governance as operating through management as the structure for the end processes of planning, co-ordinating and directing the activities of people, departments and organisations, getting things done with and through other people.

Buckland and Hofmeyr (1993:1), explain the role and function of educational governance in the face of educational transformation in South Africa. They see governance as the system of administration and control of education in a country, the whole process by which education policies are formulated, adopted, implemented and monitored.

The term governance can therefore be taken to include both the structures and the processes of decision making that together determine and maintain where power resides in organisations and systems. It follows that the concept of governance extends to the whole process of policy, planning and administration that regulates and controls a system, such as a whole state, an education system or an individual school (Taylor, 1998a:1). As an extension of this definition, one can define persons or groups who are designated, by election or because of their office, to exercise governance as governors, often collectively referred to as a board of governors or governing body (Taylor, 1998a:2).

Because school governing bodies receive their powers of governance by legislation, they are in effect part of the statutory structures of governance. As Harding (1987:3) suggests, they can be

regarded as part of the partnership in educational provision since they take on statutory obligations and duties.

Gomage (1993:135) states that the school governing body represents the devolution of power and the creation of the new structure for the participation of all stakeholders envisaged to foster autonomy, flexibility, productivity and accountability. This formal body at school level is known by various names, such as school committee, school board, management committee or school council. The SA Schools Act terms it a “governing body” (RSA, 1996b:5). The second amended Education White Paper of 14 February 1996 (RSA, 1996a) on which the SA Schools Act is based, gives the following definition for governing body (Section 3.8): The term “governing body” will be used uniformly to describe the body that is entrusted with the responsibility and authority to formulate and adopt policy for each public school in terms of national policy and provincial education regulations.

It is important to recognise that the powers of governing bodies relate to the body as a whole and not to individual members, who have no powers of their own. It is the collection or body of governors acting as a corporate group which has the powers of decision. It relates closely to the distribution of power within any organisation or system, while one of the major or key objectives of governance is to maintain control and order. This is achieved through practical elements of governance, as mentioned above, such as planning and policy making, implementing plans and policies, regulating and co-ordinating, distributing resources and monitoring effective policy implementation (Gold and Evans, 1998:25).

Policy and policy documents are a very significant part of governance (Taylor, 1998a:2). One of the clearest expressions of governance is the right or power to make and enforce policy, since policy implies the authority to determine what shall be done and the power to enforce or regulate what is done. Policy documents are therefore very important symbols or blueprints of power. Obviously the source of a policy document determines the amount of power or authority that backs it up. Documents like a nation's constitution represent the highest authority in the land, and legislation and official documents also have the backing of the State. Many other groups in society also produce policy documents, as did the political groupings opposed to apartheid, such as the African National Congress (ANC). Such documents may not have the backing of the law, but may represent the views of a significant majority, carry a moral force in the eyes of some, or claim to express greater legitimacy than official policies. In South Africa there has been a long debate about the nature of governance itself and the definitions in this section cannot avoid



recognising that defining a concept is also a process of contestation. "Who decides what governance means?" is itself a political question (Taylor, 1998a:3-4).

Governance is therefore all about power, how it is distributed and who has a right to exercise it. This question was of course of great importance during the negotiations in South Africa between 1990 and 1994 to determine how to transform the country into a democratic state. Helpful sources giving insight into this debate are a working paper entitled *Educational Governance in South Africa*, Buckland and Hofmeyr (1993) and the report of the Governance and Administration Research Group of the NEPI project (1992). Both documents set out extensive descriptions of different models of governance and analyse alternatives against the background of sound theoretical research. A summary of key issues about governance emerging from these documents includes the following:

- the balance of power between centralised and decentralised forms of governance;
- the nature of educational bureaucracy (including management), especially regarding accessibility or having a say about the matters affecting stakeholders;
- identifying stakeholders and defining roles for them;
- participation and representation;
- contestation and local-level structures.

The NEPI document distinguishes between two main expressions of governance (NEPI, 1992:37-56). Firstly, there is a more systemic and structured or bureaucratic approach in which the control of schools is strongly incorporated into larger societal structures such as overall developmental strategies of government, or of the education department as a whole. The second perspective is termed a 'school governance perspective' and envisages a far more participative form of control over schools, where in a more strongly decentralised way, local communities take part directly in decision-making about their schools. This approach has a more clearly defined democratic aim, namely the process of democratisation and of increasing the role of civil society (NEPI, 1992:44). The NEPI report notes that because of the history of mass democratic struggle in South Africa and opposition to bureaucratic and centralised controls, the second alternative would seem more appropriate to a truly democratic transformation (NEPI, 1992:53).

In the context of this study, the issue about governance is about how the power vested in the State is divided or shared. More specifically this is about how the State allows civil society to participate in making decisions about running the education system for which the State has overall responsibility. In terms of the governance structures set out in the Constitution of the

RSA (RSA, 1996c) the State, through the government of the day, is responsible for making legislation at national level to ensure the provision and maintenance of an education system for all the citizens of the country. Through the Constitution, schooling is delegated to the nine different provinces as a regional responsibility, with the protection of parental rights to have a say in the education of their children (Taylor, 1998a, 2-3).

This right of parents is expressed in practical terms at local or community level, by giving parents a say in the running of the specific school(s) attended by their children. In order to establish the boundaries of State, provincial and parental rights and responsibilities with regard to the running of public schools, legislation was enacted in the form of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996b).

The patterns of governance affecting schooling can be termed educational governance or school governance. From the above it can be seen that school governance depends on the patterns of governance at national level, i.e. as laid out in the Constitution and other legislation at national level that sets overall boundaries and responsibilities. Because the relevant legislation refers to the delegation of governance to individual schools, it would seem most accurate to define school governance, then, as the governance or control of a specific individual school by those who qualify to be its body of governors. A school governing body (SGB) is therefore the group of people who, in terms of the relevant legislation, are specified *ex officio* or have been elected or co-opted to serve as governors in a particular school (Taylor, 1998a:4).

The precise composition, roles and responsibilities of SGBs are prescribed in the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b). Policy documents such as this Act are such an important part of governance that this study chose to devote a chapter specifically to the analysis of the policy frameworks that determine the existence of SGBs and what their role should be (Chapter 3).

To complete this discussion of governance, it might be asked what sort of people might exercise the role of governors.

Ideally, according to Gold and Evans (1998:26-35) people elected as governors should be knowledgeable about committee procedures. They may be lawyers, doctors, social workers, bus drivers, mothers or factory workers. All stakeholders should, if possible, have useful knowledge about children, the community, buildings, rights and obligations, curriculum and social problems.

In their view, the two most important qualities of the effective school governor are:

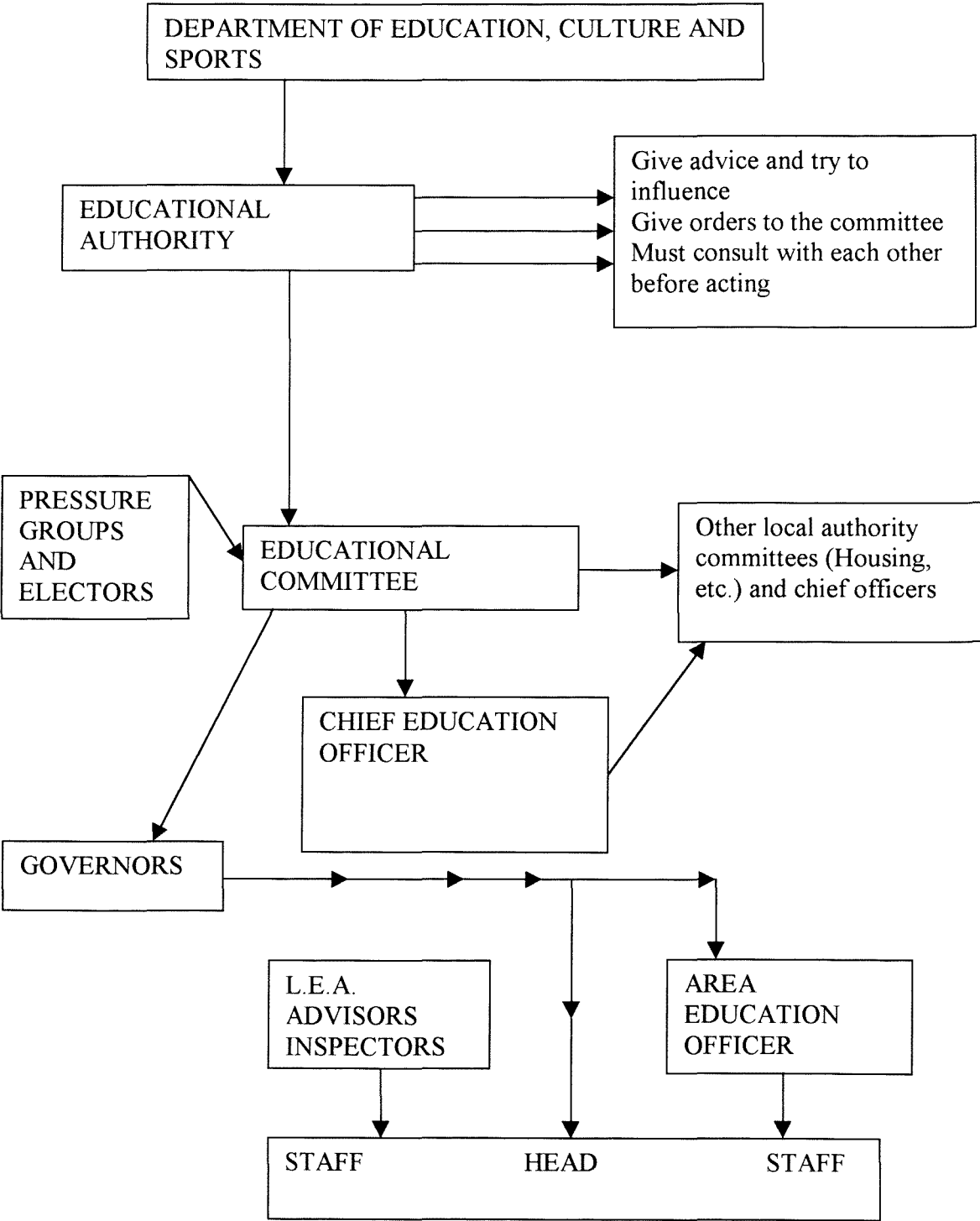
- a concern for the wellbeing of children, teachers and others in the school community;
- common sense.

Gold and Evans (1998:28) stress that it is essential to have effective governors, because certain school heads and teachers prefer governors with little interest in the school, because this will lead to the least outside interference. Commenting on governing bodies in the British school system, they point out that the function of governors is not to control the school, but to help sort out problems and to get the best possible deal for their school, even with the help of outside agencies. They add a further dimension to the question of quality by raising the issue of remuneration. They assert that the best partnership between professional teachers and interested lay people in the community, whether these are governors or parents, occurs when it is accepted that decisions about the day-to-day running of the schools must be made by paid professionals.

Although the main focus of school governors is on their own individual school, the literature also points out that there is an outside or national dimension. There are times SGBs are called upon to act in the school's interests in relation to developments at regional, departmental or government level. Wragg and Dorington (1980:8) suggest that at national level, governance is mainly concerned with the relationship between public schools and the state.

To answer the question "How do governors fit into the education system?" Wragg and Dorington (1980:8) show how SGBs fit into the larger organisational context of the English system of public schooling. Their diagrammatical representation below, although different in detail from South Africa, shows that the basis for governance is a type of power sharing. No single person or body has supreme authority, but rather a large number of individuals and organisations are consulted, involved or given responsibility for parts of the system.

Of special interest in the diagram is that the influence of pressure groups is recognised. Pressure groups are nowadays very active in several fields, including in their influence on school governing bodies. This involvement is in the interest of all South Africans and of the development of democracy in our country (Sowetan, 1999:10).



**FIGURE 2.1** Diagram from *Handbook for School Governance* (Wragg & Dorington, 1980)

## 2.4 PARTICIPATION

As was discussed above, governance involves a sharing of power, often through partnerships, by role players with different responsibilities and interests. In South Africa, this idea of partnership has expressed itself in pre- and post-1994 debates as an expectation and even an insistence to participate. In a perceptive article drawing together the key themes of "Democracy, participation and equity in educational governance" Sayed and Carrim (1997:91) note that "central to the notion of educational democracy in South Africa is the idea that democracy entails, and should enhance, greater participation".

This comes against the background not only of democratisation in South Africa, but of the greater emphasis on rights and on the role of civil society that has characterised the last decades of the Twentieth Century (Taylor, 1998a:15). There has been a shift in the way that whole societies see themselves and how they should be governed. The politics of citizenship have replaced the politics of social and economic policy. How things are done and the way in which people take part in their own government have become as important as the distribution of wealth and opportunity (Barker, 1994:19).

In the business world, a partnership means that a number of people who have a common goal co-operate with one another by contributing something of value (for example money or skills) to a relationship with the aim of making a profit. Participants may have different roles to play in a partnership. In the field of education, the "profit" is better education for all learners. Therefore all the stakeholders in education must accept their responsibilities concerning the organisation, governance and funding of schools. They are the members of the new partnership in education and must give whatever is necessary to ensure that schools provide good education and that they function properly. In business, partners must be able to trust one another. Similarly, this should be the aim of the new partnerships developing in education (Barker, 1994:19-20).

Effective participation is generally characterised by aspects such as:

- mutual trust and respect;
- shared decision making;
- shared good goals and values;
- common vision;
- open communication;
- good team work;

- promotion of the interests of the stakeholders rather than those of the individual; and
- respect for the roles of different partners (Harding, 1987:3).

To illustrate this, Harding says that the education system in England and Wales is often referred to as a partnership, because responsibilities for the provision of education are shared between central and local government. The school governing body can also be regarded as part of the partnership since it has statutory obligations and duties (Harding, 1987:3).

But within schools themselves, shared governance implies the need for partnerships or participative decision-making. The World Bank Popular Participation Learning Group defines participation as a process whereby those with legitimate interest in the project influence the decisions which affect them (Deem and Brehony, 1995:14). Decisions on policy affecting matters such as homework, uniforms, extramural activities and discipline should be made jointly by parents, teachers and pupils (learners) to ensure the maintenance of the culture of learning.

Deem and Brehony (1995:14) suggest that there are six prerequisites for this sort of co-operative governance, namely:

- transparency, particularly through the form, control and accessibility of information;
- building the capacity of legitimate stakeholders to participate;
- the establishment of representative and effective structures at national, regional and institutional levels;
- greater participation by the majority and increased representation for previously disadvantaged constituencies;
- participation that distributes advisory, policy-making, implementation and monitoring functions; and
- the provision of clearer definitions of academic freedom, autonomy and accountability.

Furthermore, participation can occur at different levels, such as:

- information sharing;
- consultation;
- initiating action.

Consultation is a valuable way to canvass opinion and have the organisational structures represent their views effectively. Participation may therefore be seen to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

## 2.5 STAKEHOLDERS

The important question is: Who has the right to participate? Clearly, within the ideals of democracy those who claim a right to participate are those who have an interest or a stake, those who are affected by the decision-making or policy brought about by the governance structures under which they find themselves (Taylor, 1998a:25).

Conventionally, stakeholders in the school situation are taken to be the main groupings who, have a direct interest in what happens in the school. These are (a) those who are employed there, such as teachers/educators and non-educator staff, and (b) the clients of education, namely the learners and their parents as primary educators. Indirectly one could also consider the State as the provider of education, teachers' unions and the employment sector as additional parties with an interest in education, but these are not typically regarded as close stakeholders in the individual local school. Taylor (1986: 53-54) says that parent-teacher student associations are now often known as school associations so as to emphasise that they are open to everyone interested in schooling.

The SA Schools Act identifies five main stakeholders (Sayed and Carrim, 1997:95):

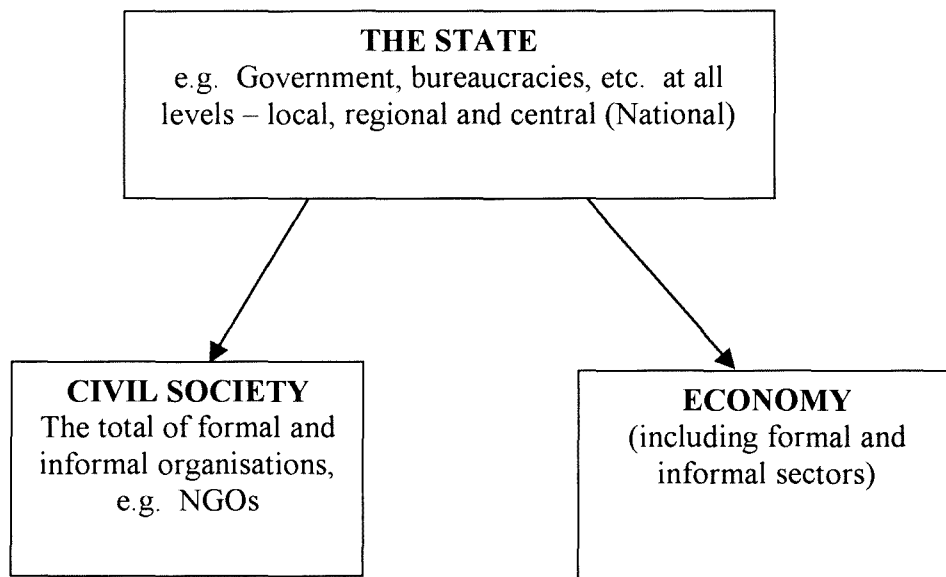
- ❑ parents, by virtue of their responsibility for their minor children and as the group with the primary stake, because education is firstly in the interests of their children;
- ❑ educators, as those who provide the learning opportunity to learners and as professionals are qualified to contribute to shaping the educational policy of the school, and who also as employees have a vested interest in school policies affecting their working conditions;
- ❑ non-educator employees in the school, such as secretaries and cleaning staff, also with a vested interest in the governance structures which determine school policies that affect them;
- ❑ learners, as the recipients of the learning opportunity and numerically the main group in a typical school (although for reasons of maturity, learner representation is restricted to learners in Grade 8 and above. Below Grade 8 learners are deemed to be represented by their parents);



- the school principal, *ex officio* as the representative of the Education Department and the officer in charge of school management.

Sayed and Carrim (1997:92) draw particular attention to the dominant position given to parents as stakeholders. They observe that the election of April 1994 marked a significant shift in policy development. In education, parents, although only agents for their children, became constructed as the principal customers of schools and consumers of schooling.

The diagram below shows how different parts of society become drawn together in participation, while still preserving their identity as recognisable constituencies.



**FIGURE 2.2** Diagram to represent participation of role players

## 2.6 FURTHER CONCEPTS RELEVANT TO SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Paragraph 3(1) of the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b:4-6) states that "Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, every parent must cause every learner for whom he or she is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches

the age of seven until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first."

Paragraphs 16-33 of the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b:14-22) set out the specific requirements for school governance under the new dispensation. Paragraph 16 specifies that " ... the governance of every public school is vested in the governing body". In particular these paragraphs specify the composition, powers and functions of school governing bodies.

From the above it will be seen that key concepts needing closer definition are learner, public school and school governing body. In view of their importance within the context of this study, the concepts parent, educator are included, as well as the concept school community.

### **2.6.1 Learner**

Learner is the description that applies to any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b:4). The whole of Chapter 2 of the Act, i.e. Paragraphs 3-11, deals with learners, ranging from compulsory attendance and admission to matters such as language, religion, code of conduct, discipline and suspension, as well as the requirement that there be a representative council of learners at every public school enrolling learners in the eighth grade or higher (RSA, 1996b:4-10).

The Act draws a clear distinction between learners above and below Grade 8 as regards participation in school governance. Paragraph 23 on membership of governing bodies of an ordinary public school specifies that "Learners in the eighth grade or higher at the school" shall be one of the categories of elected members of the governing body (RSA, 1996b:18).

### **2.6.2 Public school**

Schools occupy a position of great importance in society. Almost all the citizens of a country have some experience of schools in their lifetime, either as learners or as parents, or both. Schools are widely seen to prepare people to fit into society and to be a main contributor to helping citizens for a n economically productive life (Taylor, 1998a:8). Schools are therefore a matter of great public interest, which is why the provision of schooling is regarded as one of the State's main responsibilities to the citizens of a country.

In general terms, the school is an institution with a well-defined goal and function in society. It is the institution entrusted exclusively with education, in this case specifically at the levels of primary and secondary education. A school should take on only those special purposes that can be converted easily and naturally into educational goals and activities (Du Plooy, Griesel and Oberholzer, 1987:164).

Stone (1981:29) describes the school as an instructional institute or structure which is further qualified by education, while Van der Westhuizen (1991:405) refers to it as a place of tuition and learning, an open system established to meet the educational and training needs of the community at large. Gorton (1983:433) sees schools as occupying a significant place in their social setting and states that a school is not an independent or isolated entity; but operates in a social context, an important element of which is the local community. The World Book Encyclopedia (1989:18) in fact defines school as one of society's most important institutions.

Of more importance to this study is to define schools as they are seen officially in terms of government policy and legislation. The SA Schools Act uses the terms *school* and *public school*. *School* is defined as "a public school or an independent school which enrolls learners in one or more grades between grade zero and grade twelve" (RSA, 1996b:4). The government's definition of *public school* is set out comprehensively in Chapter 3 of the Act in paragraphs 12-33 (RSA, 1996b:10-22), which defines public schools as ones which are, among other things, provided by the State, government funded and usually fully State owned. The same section of the Act includes the paragraphs dealing with the status and governance of such schools. A clear distinction drawn between *public schools* and the general term *schools* is that the Act delegates powers of school governance to governing bodies only in *public* schools (RSA, 1996b:14, para. 16(1)).

### **2.6.3 School Governing Body (SGB)**

The definition of *governing body* given in the SA Schools Act is that it "means a governing body as contemplated in Section 16(1)" of the Act (RSA, 1996b:4) which states, as noted above, that "Subject to this Act, the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body" (RSA, 1996b:14). The Act goes on to specify how a governing body is to be constituted and composed. It is thus clear that the governing body of school is the body of duly elected representatives, ex officio members and (where applicable) co-opted members who collectively are entrusted by this legislation with the responsibility and power to govern the school.

A detailed discussion of the composition, powers and duties of school governing bodies is given in Chapter 3 of this study, which analyses the legal frameworks that define the role of SGBs.

#### **2.6.4 Parent**

The definition of the concept *parent* is important because parents are specified as one of the main stakeholder groups who must be represented on SGBs. The legal definition of parent in the SA Schools Act is expressed in wider terms than direct blood relationship (RSA, 1996b:4(xiv)):

*"parent means-*

- (a) the parent or guardian of a learner;
- (b) the person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or
- (c) the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) towards the learner's education at school."

#### **2.6.5. Educator**

In the context of another, more philosophical, study the concept of educator would probably focus on a critical evaluation of the role and quality of the person and lean heavily on interpretations of the nature of education itself. That approach is not applicable to this study.

For the purpose of this definition, it is noted that educators are specified as a key stakeholder group who must be represented on the SGB. The SA Schools Act defines an educator in terms of a previous legislation as follows: "educator means an educator as defined in the Educators' Employment Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 138 of 1994)"(RSA, 1996b:4). The SA Schools Act clarifies this even further in two places: in Paragraph 63, under the heading "Repeal and amendment of laws", the Act states that "The Educators' Employment Act ... is hereby amended to the extent set out in Schedule 2" (RSA, 1996b:38). Schedule 2 then provides the amended definition. The important point of definition in this case is that, apart from the describing the professional function of educators, the term is based mainly on the employment status of an educator as an "employee member" engaged in service of the Education Department or governing body of the school to teach at the specific school (RSA, 1996b:42, paragraph 1(b)).

As part of this definition, it can be noted that a related category of stakeholders specified in the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b:18) is "members of the staff at the school who are not educators".

This group of non-educator staff can also be defined in terms of two main qualifications: firstly the fact of their employment at the specific school by the Department of Education or governing body of that school and, secondly, by the fact that are staff members not engaged in professional teaching duties. This group includes members of staff such as secretaries, bursars, janitors, caretakers, cleaners, grounds staff or any other non-educator employee of the school.

#### **2.6.6 School Community**

This concept is included here because of the particular focus of the title of this study, namely on SGBs in the largely rural areas of Northern Province. It is important to recognise that SGBs are representative of the communities in which the individual school stands. Schools are part of the life of the community. Van der Westhuizen (1991:405) further emphasises that the concept school community may be in a narrower sense a form of community life in which the school principal, teachers, parents, children and former pupils work together in the interests of educative teaching and training the child. This definition again draws attention to the sense of shared interest between the role-players closely involved in the local school. This sense of community has great potential to be exploited in the interests of school development.

Despite the above, Sayed and Carrim (1997:95) underline how problematic the concept of community can be because of the diverse ways in which it can be defined (territorial, religious, ethnic and political). They observe that the term community "signifies common and shared aspects of human interaction" and note that "all the policy texts relating to school governance unequivocally state that the community should be represented on governing bodies". But they warn that while the notion has tremendous emotional and popular appeal, it is difficult to find a homogeneous expression of community or one that is not characterised by inequalities, fragmentation and conflict (1997:95).

### **2.7 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT**

A clear distinction needs to be drawn between the functions of governance and management in the context of public schools.

The South African Schools Act makes provision for both the governance and the professional management of public schools. Following Paragraph 16(1) in which the Act delegates the

governance of every public school to its governing body, Paragraph 16(3) specifies that "Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, the professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department" (RSA, 1996b:14).

As was seen above in Section 2.3 on Governance, school governance concerns the location of power or control in a school, as delegated by higher levels of power or authority. School governance involves an overall authority and a responsibility for the wellbeing of the school. This means that a SGB is responsible for determining the policy and rules by which each school is to be organised and controlled. It implies that such rules and policies are carried out effectively in terms of the law as well as the income and expenditure of the school. School governors are therefore accountable to the community, especially the stakeholders whom they represent, for the overall functioning and quality of the school. This involves a significant shift from the previous situation in schools before representative governance was introduced. Traditionally, school principals and staff tended to manage schools for the departments that employed them and to see the community as partners in the educational endeavour, but not necessarily as co-decision makers about school policy (Taylor, 1998a:2).

The introduction of school governance, as envisaged by the SA Schools Act, makes it necessary to distinguish two clearly different lines of authority and functioning, but linked in partnership (Taylor, 1998:2). The first line is that of power, control or governance. Within the ideals of a participative democracy outlined in the SA Constitution (RSA, 1996c) and captured in the Preamble to the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b:2), power is seen to belong to the people, enshrined in the Constitution.

The Constitution also makes provision for State functions, such as the provision of schooling, to be entrusted to Cabinet and Ministers of the government of the day. Ministers in turn delegate certain powers to the Member of Executive Council (Provincial Minister) entrusted with the relevant portfolio in each respective province, who then as part of provincial governance is responsible for policy-making applicable within the province. In the SA Schools Act this line of governance is clearly defined, both in the definitions given in Paragraph 1 of the Act (RSA, 1996b:2-4) and in Paragraph 12 which provides for the "Provision of public schools" (RSA, 1996b:10). The responsibilities of the National Minister of Education are set out, as are the duties of Member of the Executive Council (Provincial Minister of Education). Throughout the Act and specifically in Paragraph 62 on "Delegation of powers" (RSA, 1996b:36) the capacity



and duty of the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) to further delegate powers is outlined. In particular the Provincial MEC delegates powers of governance of individual schools to the local community through the institution of elected representative governing bodies (Taylor, 1998a:2-3). This is a line of governance, expressed in the power to make decisions and to formulate and implement policy in the school context.

The second line of authority relates to administrative responsibility. This relates to the government's duty to deliver schooling to the community and oversee the implementation of national policies. In terms of the Constitution and education legislation, the national Ministry of Education delegates the responsibility for primary and secondary schooling to the nine Provinces (Department of Education, 1997b:15). Each province has a Department of Education responsible for the administration of schools in that province, under the direction of a Head of Department, sometimes designated the Superintendent General of Education. As Head of a public service bureaucracy, this is an administrative and management position. The provincial Department of Education is responsible for, among other things, (a) ensuring that adequate schools are built and maintained in the region, (b) employing sufficient educators to staff those schools, (c) running the provincial budget for education and (d) ensuring that the relevant policies are implemented (Taylor, 1998a:3-4). The difference between the governance duties of the MECs and the administrative functions of the Head of Department are clearly delineated in the definitions and stipulations of the SA Schools Act, already referred to in the previous paragraph.

To achieve their responsibility of ensuring that learners are educated in schools, the Department of Education employs teachers who are answerable, in individual schools, to their principal as professional head. As manager of the school, the principal is primarily responsible for the implementation of policy. From this systemic perspective, the principal's task as manager is primarily one of supervision. This includes supervision of his or her staff of professional educators and non-educators, of the conduct of the learners and of the running of the curriculum (Taylor, 1998a:4). From this perspective and as seen in the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b:14) principals are therefore professional managers.

Professional management refers to the day-to-day administration and organisation of teaching and learning at the school and to the performance of the departmental responsibilities that are prescribed by law (Department of Education, 1997a:11). It covers all the activities that support teaching and learning. But many day-to-day matters as well as the overall quality of the



education programme offered by the school are of concern to the school governors as the body entrusted with authority over the well-being of the school. It has been the personal observation of the researcher that many principals are not used to having members of the community sharing decisions about matters that affect their running of the school. The researcher has noticed that educators sometimes regard the practice of participative governance as interference or an infringement of their professional competence.

At the same time, members of SGBs also need to discern which matters relate to broad policy concerns, where their influence is required, and which matters should be left for routine management by the principal. Sayed and Carrim note (1997:92) that one problem inherited from the demand for participation that accompanied the democratic struggle against apartheid was that "PTSAs conflated the demand for participation and their ability to effectively manage schools. In fact, an endemic problem of PTSAs was that they did not necessarily possess the required skills to manage. Thus, PTSAs were unable to separate the function of governance from administration and management."

From the above comparison of the functions of governance with those of management, it appears that this important difference is a subject that could profitably be discussed in an open and enquiring way in SGBs when they meet together to clarify their role. It is also a necessary topic for workshops for the capacity building of SGBs as well as during in-service training for school principals.

## **2.8 RURAL EDUCATION**

### **2.8.1 The concept "rural"**

Rural education refers to education outside the cities and usually lacks the benefits of development and sophistication of schooling in the urban areas. Rural communities therefore usually experience their educational provision as underdeveloped or backward.

In the previous chapter (Section 1.6), the researcher attempted to justify the use of the term *rural areas* in the title. That section described or defined areas in Region 3 of Northern Province as all being broadly of a rural character, although some parts of the region were described as *deep rural* compared to those in the surrounding of the town of Thohoyandou. The defining

characteristic of this generally rural context, according to the researcher, was the rural orientation of the people, not the actual physical location in, near or away from an urban area. Even the town of Thohoyandou is situated in a rural hinterland, distant from and less influenced by the modernisation associated with urbanisation.

From this description it is apparent that reference to the rural context of schools introduces the need to look at the concept of development. The view has been expressed (Sowetan, 1997:7) that to overcome the sense of deprivation or underdevelopment found in rural areas, these communities need to experience the accelerated delivery of quality education through partnership and good governance.

### **2.8.2 Rural development**

The broad heading of rural development is used in relation to the theme of rural areas. But in a more precise sense this section could be headed: School development in rural areas.

The process of community education is linked to the process of community development, which is always conceived as being purposeful and positive. School development can take place in both developed and developing countries, but the priorities are different in two ways. In developed countries, industries aim to assist society members to cope with the effects of industrialisation and modernisation. In developing countries, industry aims specifically also at improving the quality of life in the rural areas.

A school development plan is a record of what the school wants to achieve. The concept “developing country” is usually associated with the world’s poorest nations or with the “have-not” parts of a country. Such regions were once called undeveloped countries. It is no secret that developing countries experience an increasing population where death rates have decreased but birth rates remain high. Typically, conditions in these areas require community leaders who strive to bring about all the facilities which are needed to obtain free and quality education. Often this requires strategies that are different, or in addition, to existing provisions. For example, to improve poor school-leaving results, leaders could attempt to conduct extra lessons when schools are in recess. Other related problems in rural or development areas are a situation of disease, illiteracy and inadequate equipment, which keeps agricultural and commercial production low. These factors are most harmful in rural areas, where most of the people in developing countries live. Most of the people in disadvantaged areas depend on one or two main

crops and suffer if these crops fail. All these characteristics apply in large measure to South Africa's rural areas and also to the Northern Province region, which is the focus of this study.

To accelerate the delivery of quality education, rural communities desperately need forms of partnership and good governance (Sowetan, 30 July 1999:7). It is the responsibility of the stakeholders at local level to take ownership of this problem and to take a lead in promoting better performance of the rural school areas, especially in the Northern Province.

Part of school development is that there be a vision for a school community. It is highly desirable that the governors of schools in rural areas achieve a vision for their schools. There need to be short-term and long-term goals. All stakeholders must bring development into these poorer communities by hiring competent, knowledgeable, skilful and capable people in the improvement of planning, teaching, management, organisation, resources and finance. All physical buildings in the rural areas should be improved. Poverty can be minimised in the rural areas by providing teachers with high morale, good qualifications, text books and desks in time in all schools.

It is educationally desirable that the governors prioritise the needs of a school. Developing countries, and especially the rural areas in these developing countries, are experiencing serious problems such as unemployment, under-employment and mass migration to the cities. Governors of schools in developing areas need to give their schools a vision appropriate to rural community development. They need to foster a focus on the community's need to supply the basic necessities of life to all citizens, for example health services, food, clean water, electricity, primary, secondary and vocational education. The major result to be expected is the improvement of living conditions in the society and an improvement in the standard of living. These overall community needs are not, of course, the responsibility of the school governors to remedy, but unlike schools in developed societies, the vision of schools in rural areas must incorporate community development and partnerships with government and development agencies.

## **2.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter first identified four main concepts of special significance to the study: Democracy (which was linked with transformation); Governance; Participation; and Stakeholders. Each of

these was defined and described, bringing out their relevance to the topic of the research, namely school governance and the role of school governing bodies. The second part of the chapter was also devoted to conceptual clarification, concentrating on six specific concepts directly relevant to understanding school governance. These were the concepts learner; public school; school governing body; parent; educator; and school community. Because of much confusion between the concepts school governance and school management, a section was devoted to clarification of the difference and overlap between the two functions. The final section of the chapter attempted to bring greater clarity about the use of term rural area and to discuss briefly the notion of rural development - or more specifically school development in rural areas.

## CHAPTER 3

### LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

On one hand, the existence of school governance has come about because of the political demand for participation in the running of schools, as part of the history of democratic struggle in South Africa discussed in the previous chapter. At the same time, and in a more exact sense, school governance and the role that school governing bodies are expected to play are defined by legal and policy frameworks, in the form of the relevant legislation.

This chapter turns the focus to this framework as one of the defining perspectives on the theme of the research.

Two main Acts or policy documents frame the institution of school governance. These are the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996c), enacted as the cornerstone of the new democratic dispensation, and the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b) which shortly preceded the new constitution and aimed to provide "a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools ... [based on] ... uniform norms and standards ... throughout South Africa" (RSA, 1996c:2).

The chapter directs attention mainly to these two Acts. Firstly, however, there is a short section (3.2) that examines the importance of policy and legal frameworks as determinants of educational practice - in this case school governance.

Section 3.3 of this chapter is about the Constitution of the RSA (RSA 1996c) and Section 3.4 deals with the piece of legislation that is most directly applicable to the theme of this study on school governing bodies, namely the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b). The chapter concludes with a section (3.5) briefly summarising other relevant legal and policy documents.

### 3.2 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The intention in this section is to emphasise that changes in the education system, such as the introduction of school governing bodies, are determined and controlled to a large extent by the process of official policy making that leads usually to the passing of legislation. Because policy is backed by the authority of the State it has the force of law, it is authoritative and determines the direction in which practice must move (Taylor, 1998a:1). The term law refers to the existence, functioning and performance of a matter according to laws in the form of natural laws, principles, norms, judicial laws, ordinances, regulations or rules (Van Schalkwyk, 1992:17).

Because an Act of Parliament or piece of legislation has the force of authority or power behind it has the capacity to prohibit, command, compel, protect, guarantee, determine and ensure action in specified ways (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:46). Without legislation, education would have no fixed juridical basis, which means it would not be enforceable. If there were no legislation, education would be unprotected and subjected to the changing decisions of individuals. It would lack a fixed common goal if there were no fixed juridical basis.

Policies are statements of intention because they try to set out the steps by which general aims will be reached in practical terms. The NEPI Framework Report (NEPI, 1993), for example shows how this was true of the political strategies surrounding the demand for "People's Education" in the 1980s. These demands became concentrated into concrete policies that later informed ANC think-tanks about policy options for the new democratic dispensation (NEPI, 1993:1-4). But policy statement only obtain authority when they are turned into statements or regulations that are backed some force that makes them binding, such as the power of law (Oosthuizen, 1994:32). This law could be a country's constitution as the supreme law, a specific Act or set of legislation, or even a set of official regulations.

In the school context, policy frameworks are just as important in determining the direction of the institution as they are at national level, only on a more limited scale (Taylor, 1998a:2). School policies apply to the length of the school day, language used for teaching, rules concerning religious observance, dress codes, codes of conduct for learners and rights and responsibilities. Policies are a kind of decision making that involves negotiations around key values and principles. Policy documents are an attempt to strike a balance between participation and equity,

between self-interest and the common good, between participatory and representative democracy and between sectional interests and legitimate political authority.

By looking at numerous descriptions of policy, it can be seen that policies generally refer to statements of intention, decisions, courses of action and/or statements about how resources will be allocated to achieve a particular purpose or solve a particular problem. Policy is not a straight-forward set of steps made up of distinct phases such as policy initiation, formulation, implementation and evaluation. Instead it is rather an interactive, dynamic and contradictory political process. During this process policy is constantly formulated, contested and adopted. It follows that policy is made at all levels. It is not made once and for all, but includes all the activities and decisions of the different social actors concerned at different stages. It may even include the influence of mass demands and protest action. For example, in the Northern Province and in Cape Town teachers have marched against the effect of rationalisation and the possible redeployment of some teachers and the protest action of Johannesburg teachers objected to a particular clause in the South African Schools Act.

A policy therefore is a means of coping with a whole range of specific demands with a well thought out plan of action and is often expressed in a general and goal-related statement. In fact, Van der Westhuizen (1991:411) says that policy making follows immediately after determining goals and is a more precise reflection of the goals. The policy describes goals in terms that are meaningful to everyone involved in school community relationships.

Drake and Roe (1980:267) emphasize two key elements of policy making for school involvement: firstly, leadership at the school site for the partnership between the school governing body and educators at the institution and, secondly, a well established management structure for promoting and overseeing participation. These writers also stress the importance that parents should also serve as policy makers in the school because it is regarded as educationally correct to involve parents in a democratic process of policy making.

In the South African context, at the time of this study, the issue of school governance is determined almost entirely by two policy documents (Taylor, 1998a:2). The first is the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996c). This policy was enacted as legislation at the end of 1996 and as the nation's constitution is the legislation that is given the highest authority, above that of Parliament and of any other legislation. All other legislation must accord with the principles and requirements of the Constitution, i.e. the



Constitution "shall be the supreme law of the Republic and any law or act that is inconsistent with its provisions shall, unless otherwise provided expressly or by necessary implication in this Constitution, be of no force and effect to the extent of the inconsistency" (RSA, 1996c:6) This principle is known as the supremacy of the Constitution.

The second policy is the Act referring specifically to the State's responsibility for the provision of schools, i.e. the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996, which sets out the steps for "the organisation, governance and funding of schools" (RSA, 1996b:2). This Act outlines the policy which the government expects each Provincial Member of the Executive Council (Minister of Education) to implement in the respective provinces. Through the provisions of the SA Schools Act, individual provinces were therefore intended to implement further legislation to enforce the provisions of the Act at provincial and local level. In the words of the Act: "Nothing in this Act prevents a provincial legislature from enacting legislation for school education in a province in accordance with the Constitution" (RSA, 1996b:4). Provincial legislation on education could thus obviously differ from province to province, provided always that it was in agreement with the provisions of the SA Schools Act as national policy, and subject to the supremacy of the Constitution.

From the above it should be clear that the legal and policy frameworks are of overriding importance in determining the implementation of school governance.

### **3.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTION**

The term constitution comes from the word "constitute", which means to "establish, give legal form to, frame, form, or make up the components of" (Fowler and Fowler, 1951:256). So a constitution is an "Act of constituting, mode in which [a] State is organised, [a] body of fundamental principles according to which a State is governed, a document embodying these" (Fowler and Fowler, 1951:256). These definitions show that a country's constitution is like a foundation, a departure point and the set of rules by which any other rules must be judged. The great importance of a country's constitution is that it usually defines itself as having the supreme authority in a State (Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch, 1997:5).

It is worth adding that in a similar way a constitutional document explains how an individual organisation should be run. As such, a constitution is like a set of rules and regulations, but it

also states the values and principles of the organisation (Department of Education, 1997a:35). In a school, the governing body's constitution will form the basis for all the governing body's work.

During the period of national negotiations in preparation for democratic elections and a transition to democracy, the negotiating parties adopted an Interim Constitution at Kempton Park in 1993 (RSA, 1993). Section 247 of the Interim Constitution acknowledged the existence of school governing bodies by giving protection to certain rights, powers and functions (RSA, 1996a:10). This Interim Constitution was in force until the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996c) was enacted by the country's first democratically elected Parliament at the end of 1996. In this study, from this point on, this new constitution will be referred to as the SA Constitution.

Two main facts directly relevant to education flow from the SA Constitution. Firstly, the SA Constitution incorporates a Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996c:8-22). Regarding the education, the SA Constitution states that (RSA, 1996c:18, Paragraph 32):

"Every person shall have the right-

- (a) to basic education and to equal access to educational institutions;
- (b) to instruction in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonable, practicable; and
- (c) to establish, where practicable, educational institutions based on a common culture, language or religion, provided that there shall be no discrimination on the ground of race."

Secondly, in Chapter 15 on "General and Transitional Provisions" the SA Constitution includes special provisions regarding existing educational institutions (Paragraph 247, which is very similar to the paragraph of the same number in the Interim Constitution mentioned above) (RSA, 1996c:176-178). Section (1) of Paragraph 247 protects the rights, powers and functions of [school] governing bodies.

The SA Constitution should thus be regarded as the country's most basic Act with regard to education (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:17). Any other laws governing education should always be studied against the background of a particular country's legal, constitutional and educational systems (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:22).

Sergiovanni (1987:172) gives another reason why a country's constitution should be regarded as very important. He draws attention to the effects of a country's constitutional dispensation on its citizens. He asserts that a main purpose of a country's Constitution is to recognize (academic) freedom in order to foster an open mind, creative imagination and an adventurous spirit.

Sergiovanni's view connects with the values and principles set out in the SA Constitution's, i.e. in the way it tries to extend and protect the individual rights freedoms of citizens. The SA Constitution forbids unfair discrimination and guarantees equality. The Bill of Rights enshrines a whole range of rights of all people and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. It therefore actually becomes the task of each school to protect, promote and fulfil the rights identified in the Bill of Rights (Steyn, Du Plessis and De Klerk, 1997:77). All learners and partners at a school have the democratic right to expect a process of participative governance and to participate in decision making about matters affecting them at the school. They also have the right to have their views on these matters heard (Steyn, Du Plessis and De Klerk, 1997:118). The SA Constitution gives firm protection to these fundamental rights of all citizens.

This framework of rights is new to South Africa but it also has a long history. According to Pampallis (1991:311), the democratic ideals expressed in the Bill of Rights in the SA Constitution have deep historical roots in the democratic struggles of South Africa. The Bill of Rights represents a strong continuity with the Freedom Charter adopted in 1955 by the Congress of the People at Kliptown, near Johannesburg. This is especially because it guarantees the fundamental human rights of all citizens irrespective of race, colour, sex, or creed and provides appropriate mechanisms for their enforcement (Pampallis, 1991:311). The democratic SA Constitution touches on all aspects of life in South Africa. The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b), which is changing the face of education in this country for the betterment of all, for instance, is based on our democratic Constitution.

To summarise in broad terms, the SA Constitution states that the Republic of South Africa is a sovereign, democratic state founded on the following values (RSA 1996c:1):

- Human dignity. The achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedom are to be the core of South African society.
- Non-racialism and non-sexism. Discrimination based on aspects such as race, creed, colour or sex is not permitted.

- Adherence to the rule of law. This means that laws to be enforced in the country must agree with the Constitution. Any law that does not agree with the Constitution can be declared illegal. In other words, the Constitution and all laws as enforced by the courts have higher authority than Parliament or the Government.
- Universal adult suffrage, a common voters roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness.

### **3.4 THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT (ACT NO. 84 OF 1996)**

#### **3.4.1 Background**

The South African Schools Act can only be properly understood against the background of the democratic transformation of South Africa. This is made clear in the Preamble to the Act (RSA, 1996b:2). The principles enshrined in the SA Constitution, discussed above, are also therefore part of the foundations of the Act.

The provision of education was one of the most contested areas in the political opposition to apartheid. The NEPI Framework Report (1993:1-4) outlines this background, which motivated its investigation into educational policy options in anticipation of a transition to democracy. This background was one of a divided and unequal system, with fragmented and unrepresentative structures of governance and was also widely perceived by the majority of the population as illegitimate (Taylor, 1998b:70-71).

Consequently, education was one of the areas of national policy making that received priority attention in the years immediately following the democratic elections of April 1994. The first significant policy statement on education, expressing the general intentions of the Government of national Unity (GNU) on educational transformation, was the White Paper entitled "Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa. First Steps to Develop a New System" (RSA, 1995a). The following extract from this White Paper illustrates the perspective of the government at the time:

*"For the first time in South Africa's history, a government has the mandate to plan the development of the education and training system for the benefit of the country as a whole and all its people. The challenge the government faces is to create a system that*

*will fulfil the vision to 'open the doors of learning and culture to all'. The paramount task is to build a just and equitable system which provides good quality education and training to learners young and old throughout the country."* (RSA, 1995a:17).

As can be seen from the above, this White Paper was a broad outline intended to shape the public discourse on education. It that led to a number of more specific pieces of legislation aimed at the reconstruction of major sectors of the education system, such as in the areas of curriculum, higher education and schooling (Taylor, 1998b:71).

One such product was the SA Schools Act, which resulted from a process of investigation by the government specifically into the provision of schooling. The first step in this process was that the government appointed a committee of investigation, under Professor AP Hunter as Chairperson, to review "the organisation, governance and funding of schools" (RSA, 1995b:2). Significantly, this committee, the "Hunter Committee", defined its task not only in relation to its brief and terms of reference, but specifically also to (a) the White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995a) and (b) selected provisions from the Interim Constitution (RSA, 1993) (RSA, 1995b:2-6). This serves to illustrate the determining influence stressed in Section 3.2 above, of legal and policy frameworks.

Within months, the recommendations of the Hunter Committee were put into a White Paper entitled "The Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools" (RSA, 1995c) for public discussion and comment. In response to the feedback received, the government produced a second White Paper with the same title in February 1996 (RSA, 1996a) (Taylor, 1998b:71-72). This White Paper formed the basis of the draft bill that passed into legislation in September 1996 as the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996b).

All draft legislation, White Papers and policy statements issued by the government since the transition to democratic government in 1994 have been based on explicit principles of democracy and with characteristics in keeping with the principles of the Constitution. These documents strongly express democratic principles of equality, access and participation. These values in fact underlie the way in which the term governance is used in most of the recent policy documents. In line with Section 247 of the Constitution, the Ministry of Education intended that the SA Schools Act would bring all inherited varieties of state and state-aided schools within a single category of public schools. As part of this trend it became clear that the Ministry of Education was moving towards a legislative framework that made allowance for decision-

making authority in schools in the public sector. Such decision-making was to be shared among parents, teachers, the community (government and civil society) and the learners in ways that would support the core values of democracy (RSA 1996:16).]

### 3.4.2 Provisions of the SA Schools Act

As implied in the title of the Hunter Committee Report and the two White Papers that preceded the SA Schools Act, the focus of the Act is on three main areas: the organisation, governance and funding of schools. Of these three areas, the second area of governance is mainly important to this study. The other provisions of the Act will therefore be mentioned only briefly at this point, to indicate the context of governance in the Act as a whole.

The Act consists of seven chapters, two schedules or appendices, and a "Memorandum of the Objects of the South African Schools Bill, 1996". The first point of interest in the light of the emphasis in this study on the determining role of legal and policy frameworks is that in the "Memorandum of Objects", it is stated in the first paragraph that (RSA, 1996b:48):

(1) The South African Schools Bill was prepared with reference to three important documents, namely -

- \* the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1993 (Act No. 200 of 1993);
- \* the Ministry of Education's first White Paper, *Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa: First Steps to Develop a New System* (Notice 156 of 1995);
- \* the Ministry of Education's second White Paper, *The Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools* (Notice 130 of 1996).

Chapter 1 gives the definitions and application of the Act. Chapter 2 deals with learners and covers matters such as attendance, access and admission, language policy, discipline and learner representation. Chapter 3 on public schools deals first with the State's responsibility to provide public schools and with the status of schools. The main part of Chapter 3 then deals with the governance and management of public schools. Chapter 4 deals with funding of public schools, including the responsibility of governing bodies to establish and administer school funds, and the liability of parents for payment of school fees. Chapter 5 deals with independent schools and Chapter 6 sets out transitional provisions for the period of re-organisation resulting from the changes initiated by the SA Schools Act. The last chapter, Chapter 7, makes general provisions



not covered in the other chapters. Schedule 1 lists amendments to previous legislation, while Schedule 2 details important amendments to the Educators' Employment Act of 1994.

The focus of this study is on the governance of public schools, especially on the role of the governing body. Aspects of the Act especially relevant to governance and the role and functioning of SGBs will therefore be highlighted in the following paragraphs under appropriate headings.

### **The status of public schools and allocation of the powers of governance**

Governance depends in the first place on the status of public schools, which the SA Schools Act specifies as follows: (14) Every public school is a juristic person, with legal capacity to perform its functions in terms of this Act RSA, 1996b:12). In the next paragraph, the governance and management functions of public schools are specified as follows:

"15.1 (1) Subject to this Act, the governance of a public school is vested in its governing body.

(2) A governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school;

(3) Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, the professional management of a public school shall be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department." (RSA, 1996b:12)

### **The capacity of SGBs to perform the duties and functions assigned by the SA Schools Act**

The Act recognises that in many communities, potential stakeholders that could be elected to serve on SGBs may be inexperienced or unqualified to perform some of the functions required of them. Paragraph 16 of the Act therefore actually makes it an obligation of the Head of Department (i.e. of each provincial department of education) to set aside funds and organise programmes for the training of members of SGBs. In evaluating the role and functioning of SGBs it is, therefore, important to ask whether in fact SGBs in a particular area have received opportunities for capacity building, what the nature of this training was and, perhaps most of all, how effective it was (RSA, 1998b:12).

### **Duties of SGBs**

It is important to note the Act indicates that duties are obligatory. The wording of the Act specifies that the following duties (slightly abbreviated here) in Paragraph 17 *must* be performed (RSA, 1998b:12-14):



- (a) promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education at the school,
- (b) draw up a constitution and submit a copy to the Head of Department by a specified date;
- (c) develop a mission statement;
- (d) support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions;
- (e) adopt a code of conduct for the learners at the school;
- (f) meet at least every three months;
- (g) keep minutes of its meetings;
- (h) on request, make these minutes available to the Head of Department;
- (i) prepare an annual budget;
- (j) establish and administer a school fund into which all money received by the school, must be paid;
- (k) raise revenues including voluntary contributions to the school in cash or kind;
- (l) open and maintain a banking account;
- (m) prepare an annual audited statement of income and expenditure;
- (n) on request by an interested party, make the annual audited statements available for inspection;
- (o) report to the parents annually;
- (p) convene an annual meeting of parents;
- (q) encourage parents to render voluntary services to the school;
- (r) at request of the Head of Department, allow the reasonable use under fair conditions of the facilities of the school for educational programmes not conducted by the school; and
- (s) perform all other functions imposed on the governing body by or under this Act;

If one analyses this list, the overall duty of SGBs seems to be to do with establishing and maintaining the actual structure of governance for the school so that the school can perform its educational task in a sound manner. To demonstrate this, the duties could be summarised in the following five clusters:

- (i) to organise the SGB itself (duties b, c, f, g, s) on the basis of a proper constitution, mission statement, regular meetings, keeping minutes and performing functions imposed under the Act;
- (ii) to support the educational programme of the school (duties d, e), through support to the principal and professional educators, as well as making policy for the conduct of learners;

- (iii) to administer the school's finances (duties i, j, k, l, m), as regards drawing up an annual budget, administering a school fund, raising revenue, keeping a bank account and preparing annual statement;
- (iv) to be accountable to both the administrative authorities (duty h) and the parent community (duties n, o, p) through making the relevant record available for inspection and by reporting to parents at annual meetings;
- (v) to maintain suitable relations the community, including parents (duties n, o, p just mentioned) and the wider community (duty r) through sharing school facilities.

These duties can be summed up under the first duty (a) of promoting the interests and development of the school.

### **Powers of SGBs**

In contrast to duties, which were listed as obligatory, powers assigned by the Act are expressed as optional: Paragraph 18 (RSA, 1998b:14) stipulates that SGBs *may*:

- (a) administer, maintain and improve the school property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable;
- (b) determine the admission policy of the school;
- (c) determine the language policy of the school;
- (d) determine the policy for religious observance at the school;
- (e) determine school times;
- (f) determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of the subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy;
- (g) recommend the appointment of educators to the Head of Department, subject to the Educators Employment Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 138 of 1994), and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995);
- (h) determine the appointment of non-educator staff to the Head of Department, subject to the Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 103 of 1994), and the Labour Relations Act, 1995;
- (i) determine, charge and enforce the payment of any school fees payable by parents of learners;
- (j) purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school;
- (k) pay for services to the school;
- (l) join voluntary associations representing governing bodies of public schools;
- (m) allow the reasonable use of the facilities of the school for community, social and school fund raising purposes, subject to such reasonable conditions as the governing body may

determine, which may include the charging of a fee or tariff which accrues to the school; and

- (n) discharge other responsibilities consistent with this Act as determined by the Minister by notice in the *Gazette* or by the Member of the Executive Council by notice in the Provincial Gazette.

What distinguishes the *powers* of SGBs from their *duties* is that powers give SGBs the opportunity to make decisions about the quality and direction that they wish to choose for their individual schools. This decision-making power means that SGBs have to make choices between different options. They therefore need to have the ability to set out goals and choose the steps that will reach the goals. This in fact means that SGBs have to develop policies for their schools. It is this right to influence and develop the particular character of the school through their own policy-making that is at the real heart of local school governance (Taylor, 1998b:16).

The allocated powers can also be clustered as follows. SGBs have the power to determine school policy regarding:

- (i) the maintenance, improvement and use of school property (powers a, m);
- (ii) admissions to the school (power b);
- (iii) language and religious observance (powers c, d);
- (iv) the school programme and curriculum, including school times, extra-murals and subject choices (powers e, f);
- (v) appointments of both educator and non-educator staff (powers g, h);
- (vi) school finances, especially to set and enforce school fees, as well as raising and controlling funds (powers I, j, k, m);
- (vii) voluntary association with other SGBs (power l).

In addition to these defined areas, power (n) creates the opportunity for SGBs to request or assert additional powers which might be consistent with the Act although not spelt out.

### **Composition and election of SGBs**

The composition of SGBs is firstly as indication of the importance that the SA Schools Act attaches to the democratic principles of participation and representation. It is also an indication of who the government sees as being legitimate stakeholders in the local school and of how the government sees the balance of interest between these stakeholders (Taylor 1998b:18).

The Act makes provision for four categories of persons who must be represented on SGBs through election by their relevant constituency:

- (a) parents who are not employed at the school;
- (b) educators at the school;
- (c) members of the staff at the school who are not educators; and
- (d) learners in the eighth grade or higher at the school.

A fifth category of membership is by virtue of the office or position of a person. Principals have to be members of the school's SGB *ex officio* (RSA, 1996b, 16 Paragraph 21 (2)).

Important other facts about the composition of SGBs are, firstly, that members of the community may be co-opted to assist the SGB to perform its duties, but co-opted members do not have voting rights (Paragraphs 21(3) and (6)). Secondly, parents must comprise the majority of members who do have voting rights (Paragraph 21 (4)) and, thirdly, learner members of SGBs must be elected by the representative council of learners (RCL) required by Paragraph 10(1) of the SA Schools Act, as already mentioned above.

Features to note from the above are that the Act thus gives the main weight of power in school governance to the parents of learners and gives learners the right to elect their own representatives. Because learners are represented only from Grade 8 upwards, it follows that learners are not represented on the SGBs of primary schools that go up to Grade 7 only. At the same time, in primary schools that include Grade 8, it is necessary to have learner representatives, who might be very young learners. The SGBs in primary schools are therefore usually slightly smaller than in secondary schools. The provision for co-opted members means that where the elected governing body lacks a particular skill or knowledge, they can ask a member of the community who does not necessarily qualify for election (e.g. as a parent) to make a contribution to informing the decision-making. But as an indication that that person does not have the democratic right as a stakeholder, he or she does not have voting rights.

Paragraph 26 (RSA, 1996b:18) sets out how elections for SGBs must be conducted. The initiative to set the dates for elections lies with the Head of Department, who designates the principal or another person as the electoral officer, who must conduct elections for each of the stakeholder representative groups, learner, parent, educator and non-educator. Elections have to be conducted by secret ballot and at meetings of the respective constituencies called after reasonable notice has been given.

**Office-bearers, committees and term of office of SGBs**

From among its members, an SGB must elect office bearers including at the following: a chairperson, a treasurer and a secretary. Only a parent member of the SGB who is not employed at that public school may serve as the chairperson (Paragraphs 27 (1) and (2)). SGBs may establish separate committees (subcommittees), such as a management committee, to deal with specific portfolios. Persons who are not members of the SGB but who possess the required expertise may be appointed to such subcommittees, but every subcommittee must be chaired by a member of the SGB (Paragraph 28).

The following stipulations apply to the term of office of members and office-bearers of SGBs: learners may not exceed one year, members other than learners may not exceed three years, and office-bearers may not exceed one year in that office. But any member or office-bearer can be re-elected or co-opted after the expiry of these terms of office (Paragraph 29). Although it is not specifically stated in the Act, because a parent representative must be the parent of a learner in that school, it is clear that the term of office of a parent member of the SGB comes to an end on the date that his or her child leaves the school.

**The role of SGBs**

The above description of how the SA Schools Act establishes the status of public schools and the composition and functioning of governing bodies enables us to ask the question: What is the role of SGBs? Another way of asking this is to ask: What do SGBs do?

These questions can be answered concisely by saying that the SA Schools Act expects or demands that, by law, every public school must have a body of elected governors who take on the responsibilities given to them by legislation. This obligation is part of the duties that come with the democratic rights given by the SA Constitution to have a voice but also to take responsibility in decision-making. This is a responsibility at community level. It involves the whole school community, not just the educators or the Department of Education.

Secondly, this responsibility gives actual power to the school community to determine the quality of education in their school. The Act gives SGBs a number of important areas of school life for which they can make individual policies that can develop and improve the quality of education. This offers communities the opportunity to be part of the democratic transformation of South Africa and to take ownership of the solutions to problems in education. If people are part of governance at local level they are also more accountable to one another.

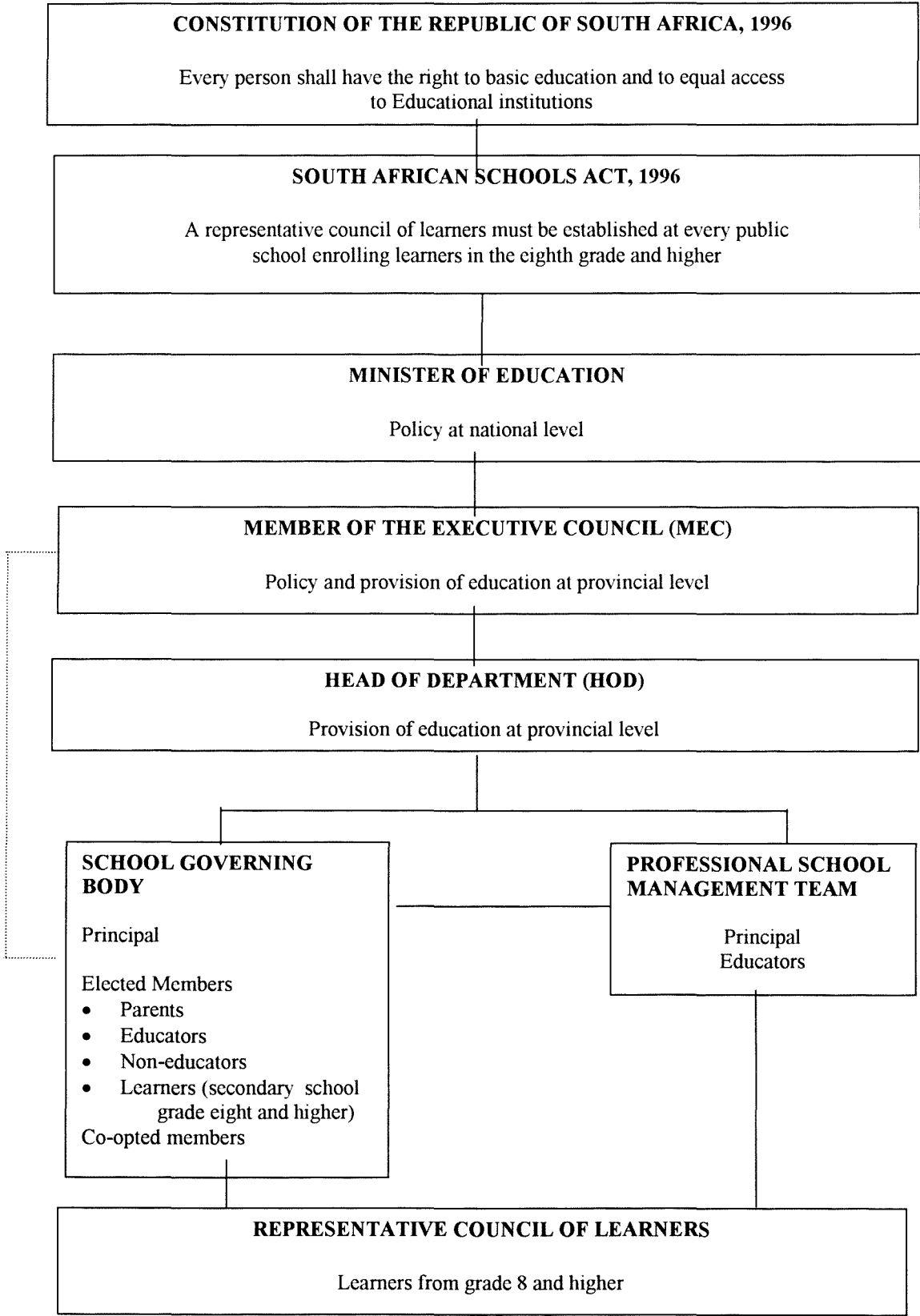
Thirdly, school improvement as pictured in the previous paragraph, depends on effective school governance. There cannot be effective governance without a properly organised governing body. The power to make policies that develop a school cannot be exercised if there is no properly working organisation as regards basic duties. The section on the duties of SGBs is therefore especially important because it sets out the practical steps by which SGBs can organise themselves and function from day to day in an efficient and accountable way. This starts with having a constitution, a mission or purpose, holding regular meetings, keeping proper records and having the sense of duty to report back to the parents. This proper functioning of the SGB also depends on using the powers given by the Act to share responsibilities through office-bearers and portfolios and to form subcommittees.

Lastly, because many communities feel inadequate to run the SGB like this, there is a great need for capacity building among SGBs. Perhaps the first priority of every SGB should be to evaluate themselves against the requirements of the SA Schools Act and decide in what areas they need to ask for help. At the same time the educational authorities, as well as school principals, should look for ways of helping local SGBs to analyse their capacity and make decisions about self-development.

The role of the governing body can be summed up in the words of the first of the duties in Paragraph 17 of the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b:12): [The SGB must] promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education at the school.

Figure 3.1 on the next page provides an organogram showing the relationship between the relevant different pieces of legislation, levels of governance, office-bearers and structures. This is an attempt to portray the way in which school governance fits into the overall legal framework of governance, from the SA Constitution down to the school community,

**Organogram indicating the position of School Governance**



**FIGURE 3.1 Organogram indicating the position of School Governance**



### 3.5 OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

The focus of this chapter has been on the two main pieces of legislation that provide the legal or policy framework for school governance, the SA Constitution (RSA, 1996c) and the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b). This section, that concludes the chapter on legal frameworks, has two functions. Firstly a short summary is given of relevant policy documents already mentioned at various points in the chapter, other than the two main Acts just mentioned. Secondly, special attention is drawn to the fact that, in line with the provisions of the SA Constitution, school governance is also subject to the educational laws enacted by each individual provincial legislature. Because of the focus of this study on SGBs in rural areas of the Northern Province, a brief summary is given of aspects of the Northern Province School Education Act of 1995 (Northern Province, 1995) of that province.

#### 3.5.1 Documents relevant to policy development for SGBs

Key documents, other than the SA Constitution and SA Schools Act, relevant to the question of school governance are summarised below in chronological order to indicate the development of policy culminating in the SA Schools Act and the SA Constitution. They have all been referred to already at various points in the discussion in this chapter.

- 1993 The NEPI Framework Report (NEPI, 1993), which investigated policy options, including for school governance, against the background of negotiating for a new democratic dispensation in South Africa.
- 1993 The Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1993), which recognised and protected certain rights for school governing bodies and applied during the transition stage until the new SA Constitution was adopted in 1996.
- 1994 The Educators' Employment Act (RSA, 1994), which impacts on the powers of governing bodies in relation to teacher employment and on the definition of educators as a stakeholder group with the right to representation on SGBs.
- 1995 The White Paper (sometimes referred to as White Paper 1) on "Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa: First Steps to Develop a New System" (RSA, 1995a), which set the broad policy framework of the new Government of National Unity for the transformation of education, including the government's intention to implement participative governance of schools through elected SGBs.

- 1995 The Hunter Committee Report on "The Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools" (RSA, 1995b), which reviewed existing forms of school governance, ownership and capacity building and proposed significant recommendations on governance and financing.
- 1995 The White Paper (referred to as White Paper 2a) entitled "The Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools" (RSA, 1995c), which was the government's first attempt to formulate the recommendations of the Hunter Committee Report into a draft Bill.
- 1996 The White Paper (referred to as White Paper 2b) also entitled "The Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools" (RSA, 1996a), which was the government's revised version of the previous White Paper, in response to public participation and comment.

The above documents, then, preceded the two Acts mainly discussed in this chapter:

- 1996 The South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996b), which set out the legislative framework for the implementation and functioning of SGBs.
- 1996 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, Act No. 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996c), including the Bill of Rights which enshrined the rights and democratic values underpinning the practice of participative school governance.

### **3.5.2 The Northern Province School Education Act of 1995**

As mentioned, in line with the provisions of the SA Constitution, school governance is also subject to the educational laws enacted by each individual provincial legislature. This section deals with the specific education law enacted in the Northern Province.

Following the democratic elections of April 1994, the education system of South Africa was restructured into a single national Department of Education at central level, with the provision of schooling decentralised regionally to the nine provinces. Each province therefore had a new, consolidated, single education department, integrated out of the formerly racially separate departments. In terms of the powers delegated by the Constitution to the separate provincial legislatures, each province was empowered to enact its own laws about the provision of schooling in that province, provided that such laws were not in conflict with any provisions of the Constitution or other national laws.

In Northern Province, within the first year of the new dispensation, the provincial government published the "Draft Regulations for Governing Bodies of Public Schools" in the Northern

Provincial Gazette, 1995 No. 16. These regulations were taken up as part of the province's new legislation when The Northern Province Schools Act was enacted in 1995.

This Act determines that the Member of the Executive Council shall establish a governing body for every school for the purpose of promoting the participation of the people of the Northern Province in the governing of public schools. It can be seen that in many ways, this legislation in Northern Province anticipated the provisions of the SA Schools Act (RSA, 1996b) a year later. This is because the Hunter Committee Report (RSA, 1995b) and the government's White Paper (White Paper 2a) (RSA, 1995c) were already in circulation and the general directions of policy about school governance had become clear in all the provinces. In any case, provinces were anxious to get their regional re-organisation going after the restructuring process (Sayed and Carrim, 1997:92).

Similarity to the SA Schools Act is seen, for example in the following. The School Education Act of the Northern Province states the following concerning the composition of governing bodies:

- the principal of a public school shall *ex-officio* be a member of the governing body of that school;
- a majority of the members of a governing body of a public school shall be parents of learners at that school;
- the disabled community served by a public school for special education shall be represented on the governing body of that school;
- educators at a public school shall be represented on the governing body of that school;
- learners shall be entitled to be represented only on the governing body of a public school which provides education at a level higher than the seventh level.

The Northern Province Schools Education Act also made provision for the fact that the legislation would need to allow for possible changes to fit in with expected legislation at national level. The Members of the Executive Council were empowered to make further regulations concerning composition of governing bodies of public schools and hostels (Northern Province, 1995:16).

Regarding co-option of members to the governing body, the Act states that the school may, by a two-thirds majority, co-opt persons as members of the governing body (Regulation 2(5)(b)). A

member co-opted under sub-regulation (1) shall not have the right to vote and hold office (Northern Province, 1995:18).

Regarding powers of SGBs, the Northern Provincial Gazette (1995:16) introduced the duties of governing bodies as follows:

- the governing body of a public school shall be the official mouthpiece of the parents of learners, the educators and the learners of a school on matters other than those relating to the professional administration of a school.

It also says that:

the Members of the Executive Council are to make regulations setting out the powers of the governing bodies of public schools within the framework of the following principles:

- state involvement in school governance should be limited to the minimum level required for legal accountability;
- the powers of governing bodies should reflect the capacity to render effective service.
- the professional administration of a school falls within the ambit of the principal and his or her staff (16).

So it was clear that all school governing bodies were to carry out functions that were set out by the MEC in a Provincial Gazette. For example, among these functions is the responsibility of the School Governing Body (SGB) to adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school (Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch, 1997:319).

### **3.5 SUMMARY**

This chapter underlined the importance of the legal and policy framework that determines how the school system is organised. In particular, the chapter examined the frameworks that have determined current policy about school governance and the institution of school governing bodies.

The chapter included a section that looked at the role of legal and policy frameworks, to show how these have a kind of authority that prescribes what will happen in practice. Policy documents express an intention about goals and actions, but they are given the force of law when they are turned into legislation.

Two major pieces of legislation were identified and discussed as the main legal determinants of school governance. The first was the SA Constitution, which provides the background values and principles on which school governance rests. The SA Constitution sets out the democratic values with which all other legislation must agree. It also upholds the citizen's rights to participative decision-making. The supremacy of the Constitution was also explained.

The second piece of legislation was the SA Schools Act, especially those sections dealing with school governance. The chapter examined the following aspects affecting SGBs: the status of public schools and allocation of powers of governance in schools; the capacity of SGBs; duties and powers of SGBs; the composition and election of SGBs; and the questions of office-bearers, subcommittees and term of office. In the light of these, an attempt was made to summarise concisely the role of SGBs and to suggest how they might organise themselves so as to fulfil their main duty to "promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education at the school" (RSA, 1996b:12).

Finally, the chapter summarised recent documents, other than the above, which could be regarded as important parts of the legal and policy framework that has shaped current legislation on school governance.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE CONTEXT OF THE NORTHERN PROVINCE**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter examines the specific context of the Northern Province. This is done in order to understand something of the characteristics of the region in which the researcher lives and hopes to make a contribution to the development of effective schooling through helping governing bodies to function better. The approach is not to give a history but to describe the context. Where historical details are provided they are to show what has shaped the present context.

As a province, Northern Province was created as a new political region from the date of the April 1994 democratic elections. It was composed out of a number of areas that were separate political entities under the apartheid dispensation. It co-incides to a large extent with what was previously loosely known as the Northern Transvaal, but during the era of separate development the National Party government identified separate ethnic groups and divided them into different territorial "homelands". Three such homelands were Venda, Lebowa and Gazankulu. Each homeland was encouraged by the government to follow its own path of political development towards the achievement of so-called independent status. In the process, only Venda (following the example of two other former homelands elsewhere in South Africa, Transkei and Bophuthatswana) accepted independent status as a "republic". Lebowa and Gazankulu remained dependent homelands, therefore, up to the time of the reconsolidation of South Africa at the democratic elections of 1994.

After April 1994, as far as schooling was concerned the new region incorporated areas that had been under several different educational administrations. White schools had been under the Transvaal Education Department (provincially) and the "Own Affairs" House of Assembly (nationally). Schools for Coloureds had been under the "Own Affairs" Department of Education of the House of Representatives, while schools for Indians had fallen under the "Own Affairs" Department of Education of the House of Delegates. The Republic of Venda and the homeland administrations of Lebowa and Gazankulu each had their own education departments. Schools

for all Blacks not included in one of these three areas were under the national Department of Education and Training (Northern Transvaal Region) (NEPI, 1992:6-9).

Because of this diversity in administration general statements about schooling in the region of Northern Province may be questioned. The researcher based his perceptions on his observations during 14 years of teaching in and around the town of Thohoyandou, in what was formerly part of the Republic of Venda, as well as having grown up in that area. The different departmental and educational histories were recognised as a potentially important variable in a study of this new consolidated provincial region.

For the purposes of this study, however, the researcher wished to draw attention only to broad general historical trends and similarities that could be applied to the region as a whole. It must be stressed that, although this study was not intended to be racially defined, the research was focused on schools that were all formerly exclusively for Black learners and were situated in largely rural and underdeveloped Black communities. In the face of the stark differences in South Africa between, on one hand, schools in highly developed and established urban communities and, on the other hand, more rural and underdeveloped communities, the researcher believed that certain features of schooling among largely rural communities have a lot in common.

The researcher's perception, therefore, was that meaningful generalisations were possible about schools in rural areas of Northern Province. For this reason, he used his experience and field research in a selection of schools in the area around Thohoyandou as the basis for his assessment of the role and functioning of school governing bodies in rural communities of similar character.

In this chapter, many of the examples were taken from the former Venda to illustrate general trends. This was done with full acknowledgement of the limitation and possible inaccuracies of basing conclusions on data from schools that were drawn mainly from one former administrative region.

This chapter sets out to give a general idea of the history affecting the education of the mainly Black rural communities in Northern Province. This is done in Section 4.2 by identifying four main stages in the provision of education to Blacks in South Africa. In the next part of the chapter, Section 4.3 focuses on the concept of the community and describes significant relationships between education and rural communities. Section 4.4 points briefly to some



features of school governance in the area studied, as practised under the previous dispensation before the 1994 consolidation into one department. School governance in the former Venda is used to illustrate this.

## **4.2 FOUR STAGES IN EDUCATIONAL PROVISION**

### **4.2.1 The Early Period (Up to 1954): Missionary education and only limited government responsibility**

Initially educational progress for Black people in Southern Africa was almost entirely due to missionary effort. The introduction and early development of formal education in Venda during the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century corresponds to the earliest world-wide provision of education by philanthropists and missionaries of the Christian faith. Initially education in South Africa was therefore regarded as the task of missionaries and churches. The earliest missionary education in Venda was commenced in 1863, but the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* became directly involved in education in Venda through subsidisation and later through direct control over previous Black education. Even later, into the twentieth century the Transvaal government remained responsible for education in Venda (Bureau of Economic Research, 1979:87-88).

Mathivha (1985:41) has written that education in Venda started as a direct result of the Great Trek and the discovery of gold and diamonds in the Southern Transvaal. When the rush to seek employment at the gold and diamond diggings was on, adventurous Venda who had left home to go and work there were enticed by the teachings and preaching of missionaries. Some even knelt before the missionaries' pulpit to be baptised. Others took the chance of attending what was universally known as "night school" for the purpose of learning the three Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic).

The usual procedure for setting up a mission station was to erect a church building for worship and, more or less at the same time, open a school offering a narrow curriculum consisting of arithmetic, reading and writing, in addition to church catechism and hymns (Ngubentombi 1989:12). The main function of the schools was to advance evangelisation, therefore to inculcate Christian principles and behaviour among the tribesmen and eradicate potent tribal customs and

organisations that seemed to menace the lives of the converts the churches had gained so laboriously (Ngubentombi, 1989:13).

The interest in learning developed through the influence of Chief Ligege Tshivhase who, as early as 1870, started to seek out missionaries to preach and to teach his people. There, however, was no clear idea that education should be a means to an end, not an end in itself, with the result that the contents of syllabi often were not based on the needs or circumstances of the Vhavenda themselves, as mentioned earlier (Bureau of Economic Research 1979:88). Meanwhile it was apparent that education as introduced to the Vhavenda people by the missionaries was regarded as something that would change their philosophy of life.

Missionaries were thus the pioneers of modern education for Blacks in South Africa. The educational system therefore was determined mainly by the missionaries' views of the needs of the people and the missionaries' own needs. The main objective of missionary education was to produce clergy to preach the gospel and win followers. It is also apparent that parents were not involved in the education of their children and state participation in the education of Blacks was slow to develop (Behr, 1984:173).

It is the view of some historians that the majority of the courses offered by missionaries were too bookish and impractical. No attention was given to the teaching of the vernacular. It was the aim of the teachers "to use English as the medium of instruction as early and as fully as possible and to devote a great part of their energies to the instruction of English as a subject". In some cases, however, schools did focus on the teaching of useful skills (Behr and MacMillan, 1971:382).

Ngubentombi (1989:13) presents an overall positive view of missionary education. He points out that Africans had come to admire English and looked down on their own languages. He suggests that "Natives have often been educated according to unsound principles". He also accepts that "missionaries, like other people, may be seen to have made mistakes". But he argues that "they can also be regarded as the people who have taken perhaps the most trouble and who alone sacrificed themselves to ensure that the education of the Native - which was inevitable from the moment that he came into contact with the white man - should contain something good" (Ngubentombi 1989:13).

For many years the entire burden of constructing, financing, controlling and organising schools was borne by the missionaries with such help as they were able to obtain from their own resources. The Africans were not afforded any active participation in the education of their children, so Africans neither contributed to its planning nor helped to teach or administer it, and education became nothing more than the introduction of European ideas and behaviour.

Then for roughly the first half of the twentieth century, from 1904 to 1954, the provincial education departments began to take a share in this responsibility. Financing became increasingly the responsibility of the central government in aiding missionary effort. There was, however, extremely limited financing (Malherbe, 1977:558).

#### **4.2.2 The Centralisation of Control (1954-1968)**

The years from 1954 to about 1968 saw a highly centralised system develop under one central State department in Pretoria (Malherbe, 1977:558).

During the period of the Second World War and immediately thereafter, South Africa experienced a tremendous industrial upsurge. In 1948 the Nationalist government was elected and began at once to implement its policy of separate development. In January 1949, soon after it had taken office, the Nationalist government set up a Commission of Native Education under the chairmanship of Dr WWM Eiselen to:

- formulate principles and aims of education for Natives as an independent race;
- indicate the extent to which the existing primary, secondary and vocational education systems for Natives and the training of Native teachers should be modified in respect of the content and form of syllabuses in order to conform to the proposed principles and aims;
- submit recommendations regarding the organisation and administration of the various branches of Native Education; and
- suggest the basis on which such education should be financed (Horrell, 1964:4).

This committee brought out its report in 1951, familiarly referred to as the Eiselen Report (U.G. 1951:53 in Malherbe 1977:545f). This report promoted the idea that Africans should be provided with a type of education that was appropriate to their largely rural tradition rather than one which channelled them towards integration into the nation's urban and industrial mainstream.

This model of thinking coincided with the ruling National Party's guiding political ideologies of racial and ethnic separation.

It was one of the most important and controversial documents on education ever to be produced in South Africa. The report was discussed at length in Parliament and gave rise to the Bantu Education Act, No. 47 of 1953. This Act was subsequently amended but its main provisions were not affected (Behr and Macmillan, 1971:396).

As indicated, the outcome of this was the new policy of Bantu Education. An indication of this was made clear in the much reported speech of the Minister of Native Affairs, later Prime Minister, Dr HF Verwoerd (*die groot induna*). On June 7 1954, in adopting the recommendations of the Eiselen Report on behalf of the Nationalist Government, Verwoerd remarked in the Senate:

*"It is the policy of my department that Bantu Education should have its roots entirely in the Native Areas and in the environment and Native community. There Bantu Education must be able to perform its real service. The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. Up till now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from own community and practically misled him by showing him the green pastures of the European but still did not allow him to graze there ..."* (Ngubentombi, 1989:17).

The Bantu Education Act of 1953, which was amended in 1954, 1956, 1959 and 1961, deals with the very broad outlines of the new system upon which the government decided. It was left to the responsible minister to make regulations covering all other matters. The Act provided for the transfer of Bantu Education from the Provincial Administration to the Union Government (Horrell, 1964:11).

As a result, in 1954 the control of Bantu Education was transferred from the Provincial Administration to the Department of Native Affairs of the central government. The Department of Native Affairs thereupon instituted a Division of Bantu Education to give effect to the education policy as set out in Act No. 47 of 1953 and to ensure that all services and activities would function satisfactorily (Malherbe, 1977:548). The country was divided into six regions on a more or less chronological basis, with a director in charge of each. Each region in turn was subdivided into inspectorates with a white inspector of schools in charge of each, and assisted by

Bantu sub-inspectors and supervisors. The headquarters of the six regions were established at Pretoria, Pietersburg, Pietermaritzburg, Bloemfontein, Umtata and King Williamstown (Ngubentombi, 1989: 50).

In 1958 a separate Department of Bantu Education was created under its own minister. The minister was given extremely wide powers to make regulations governing control of schools, conditions of service of teachers, syllabuses, media of instruction, school funds, school buildings and many other matters. The minister was empowered to establish regional or local boards, committees or other bodies to which the control and management of one or more government or community schools could be entrusted. Alternatively, control could be entrusted to a Bantu Authority. Any school board or committee could be discontinued if the minister deemed this expedient after an enquiry had been held (Ngubentombi, 1989:55).

Malherbe (1977:553) distinguished the following four types of schools that were found under the administration of the Bantu Education Department.

#### *4.2.2.1 Community Schools*

They catered for about 80% of all pupils. These schools were locally controlled by School Committees and the School Committees for groups of schools, in turn, were responsible to School Boards. The schools were fully subsidised by the Bantu Education Department in respect of teachers' salaries, furniture and equipment. Other requirements such as books and consumables were provided on the same basis as for state schools.

As time passed, especially later on during the period when ethnic "homelands" began to be developed by the Nationalist government, these School Boards were dispensed with and school committees were directly advisory to the homeland education authority. Teachers were appointed directly by the homeland departments of education and not by the school boards as was the case in the White areas. The construction of community schools outside the homelands was the responsibility of the Bantu Administration boards for the area (Malherbe 1977:553).

#### *4.2.2.2 State or government schools*

These catered for about 14% of the school population and were controlled directly by the Education Department. They were fully financed by the state and were not under the control of school committees or school boards. Primary schools, secondary schools, teacher training

schools, colleges, trade schools and boarding high schools fell into this category (Malherbe, 1977:553).

#### *4.2.2.3 Private Schools*

The enrolment in these schools decreased from 109 207 in 1961 to 63 036 in 1974. In 1974 the pupil to teacher ratio in these schools was 38:1 and the percentage of pupils in the past in primary classes was 9,4%. These schools received no state aid (Malherbe, 1977:554).

#### *4.2.2.4 Farm schools*

This type of school was built by the owner of the farm. Limited state subsidy for building materials was provided by the Department for classrooms built to departmental specifications (Behr, 1989:187). These schools were for the children of employees on the farm. A minimum enrolment of 20 pupils was required for such a school to be started. The school was managed by the owner or his authorised representative and the same government subsidies were paid as in the case of the community schools. In 1971, according to Behr, the pupil to teacher ratio was 56:1 in these schools.

The period 1953-1968 therefore can be summarised as a period in which the National Party government centralised and took over the control of the education of Blacks. This centralisation made it possible for the government to streamline and direct the education of Blacks as an integral part of the overall policy of separate development.

### **4.2.3 Centralised Control and Regional Organisation (1968-1979):**

#### **The Era of Homeland Administrations**

From about 1968 the National Party's policy of developing regional Bantu homelands for different ethnic groups marked the beginning of an era of decentralisation and fragmentation into what turned out to almost separate education systems (Behr, 1984:184). Behr comments that although separate departments were set up under separate legislative assemblies in these territories, these departments were independent administratively but remained closely linked professionally to the then Department of Bantu Education (Behr, 1984:184). Under this policy, the demarcated territories or homelands were each offered partial self-government by the establishment, in each of these areas, of a Territorial Authority with certain executive powers. The Department of Bantu Education subsidised the salaries of the teachers and books for the children (Malherbe, 1977:555-556).



The system that emerged was inevitably one of extraordinary complexity (NEPI, 1992:6). The NEPI Research Group on Governance and Administration (NEPI, 1992) gave an overview of the evolution of education for Blacks that described how the Bantu Education system had produced an extremely centralised system of control. But it also showed the contradiction of how the creation of ten bantustans after 1968 produced decentralising trends that led to a system that was fragmented, unequal and without any real autonomy at regional level. "The overall system [was] united and integrated by the structures and ideology of apartheid. ... The apparent autonomy of the different departments [was] effectively limited by the centralised financing of the subsystems. The allocation of funds [was] determined ultimately by the Cabinet of the South African Government." (NEPI, 1992:9) According to Malherbe (1977:558), the homelands remained dependent on the Treasury of the RSA for about 75% of the funds for running their education departments.

The 1970s saw the grooming of the homelands for independence (Malherbe, 1977:558). Transkei was regarded as the most advanced, and became independent in 1976. As was mentioned in the previous Chapter 3, not all the homelands wanted the government's formula for political independence. Bophuthatswana followed Transkei and in 1979 Venda accepted the status of independent republic, followed by Ciskei (NEPI, 1992:8). Only these four homelands accepted the new status.

#### **4.2.4 An Era of Parallel Governments (1979-1994)**

The independent status of Venda meant that between 1979 and the democratic elections of 1994, there were at least three parallel statuses of government in the area that has become Northern Province. It also meant that there were parallel education systems. There were areas that were regarded as part of the RSA and under the direct control of the South African government. These included separate education administrations for Whites and for Blacks. Secondly, there were education departments in the non-independent homelands Lebowa and Gazankulu and, thirdly, there was an education department in the Republic of Venda.

When Venda attained "homeland rule" status in 1969, a Homeland Department of Education and Culture was established and the local people (department) came to have some say in the drafting of packages for the education of the community. After 13 September 1979 a milestone was reached in Venda Education. Education was apparently regarded as a priority in the independent



state of Venda, and proposals for the effective improvement of the situation were called for (Tshisindi, 1992:34). Tshisindi reports that in 1979 the Bureau for Information and Broadcasting stated that the Department's objectives at all times were to develop the human potential and thereby to make available to Venda the much-needed manpower.

Smoll (1982:111), however, was of the opinion that the educational system in Venda could be compared to a bus that had been supplied according to someone else's specification. This bus, he said, was travelling to an unknown destination, was driven and maintained by using a foreign workshop manual, and was now in need of new steering, gearbox, engine, seats and road maps.

The Department faced a great challenge to increase the provision of education in a largely rural and underdeveloped area. It was striving to create a situation conducive to education taking place in schools. In 1979 the overall increase in enrolment was 3,8%. Primary school numbers increased by 2,8% and post-primary school numbers by a prodigious leap of 10,2%. Evidently, then, there was a growing need for secondary education amongst the Vhavenda. The Department of Education in Venda in 1979 was on the road towards providing the required manpower (Bureau of Economic Research, 1979:88).

Before 1979 there were very few secondary schools. But the researcher recalls that after independence, each chief or headman demanded a secondary school in his own tribe and that in many cases these schools were not only provided by the new Venda government, but were even named after the respective chief or headman. As a secondary school learner at the time, the researcher observed first-hand how enrolment in secondary schools increased by a giant stride. Progress was also made in improving the quality of education by providing better physical facilities in schools such as buildings, furniture, books and other resources.

Although local people in Venda experienced this period as one of growth and development of educational opportunities, for the Department of Education the most immediate consequence and the most important was the shortage of facilities which was aggravated by the demands for better facilities. There were high levels of expectancy in the community and people became impatient. The researcher believes that this possibly produced lasting negative results. The lack of interest in formal education still exhibited by many Vhavenda parents may be viewed as a negative reaction that contributed to the present unhealthy relationship between schools and communities in Venda.

The growth in the enrolment of pupils in secondary schools and establishment of new secondary schools forced the Venda government to introduce additional institutions for the training of secondary teachers. The aim of the secondary teachers' training was to provide teachers with knowledge of and the ability to use the subject matter and methods and techniques that they would need to present the material contained in the Junior or Senior Certificate syllabuses in the most effective way (Mathivha, 1981:50).

As elsewhere in South Africa, this period of parallel administration of education by separate departments, both in Venda and in the other homelands in the region, was a period also of considerable unrest and conflict in schools, especially after the Soweto uprising in 1976. So although there was much expansion in educational opportunities, there was not a smooth development of the overall organisation and governance of schools, because of the underlying opposition to authority.

In summary, in the researcher's view, communities in the rural areas of Northern Province experienced a considerable increase in educational opportunities during this period. But this must be seen against the background of previous underdevelopment and lack of schooling in the rural areas. The involvement of the community did not necessarily keep up with the sudden expansion of schooling. Even after the transition to a new democracy, communities in the largely rural areas of Northern Province were still unfamiliar with the idea of involvement in the running of local schools. Although some were willing to be involved, many felt scared, ignorant or inexperienced. This lack of readiness to participate in local governance of schools is one of the aspects of community development that needs serious attention.

## **4.3 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS**

### **4.3.1 The Importance of Community**

In the previous chapters it was noted that the idea of community participation figures strongly in the democratic ideals of the new dispensation in South Africa. The idea that the community plays a central role in education through the local school was also seen in Chapter 3 as fundamental to the democratic values expressed in our new Constitution and in the South African Schools Act.

In the context of this chapter on Northern Province, with its focus on rural areas, the concept of community is examined in order to throw light on its relevance to the role of school governing bodies. The researcher suggests that the nature of a particular community is very important. Participation of the kind intended in the SA Constitution and the SA Schools Act depends on the readiness, education, skills and development of each community. This research examines the ways in which school governing bodies, which rely heavily on community participation and support, can contribute to more effective schooling in the Northern Province. Before looking more closely at the essence of community involvement in schools, it is necessary first to attempt to give an overall picture of the type of community one finds in a typical rural area of Northern Province, especially as regards the levels of education among the citizens.

#### **4.3.2 Composition of Communities With Regard to Education**

The researcher suggests that educationally, it would be accurate to suggest that rural communities such as the Vhavenda community with which he is most familiar, comprise three main sections or groupings, namely uneducated, slightly enlightened and highly enlightened people. Obviously, this is an over-simplification, and people occupy a spectrum, but it is helpful to distinguish the levels of literacy present because this shows what sort of community development is needed to achieve greater participation and interest in schooling and school governance. Referring to the Venda community, the following three categories are suggested:

##### *4.3.2.1 The uneducated section*

This section of the Venda community in the Northern Province is normally found in what could be described as the *deep rural areas* such as Mangondi, Mutoti, Budeli, Tshidzini, Tshifudi, Tshaulu, Ha-Mutale and Folvhodwe. Generally, the least educated people are located in the far north of the region. These groups of people have not been exposed to formal education.

Grové and Pieterse (1987:32) have described people like these as being those settled in villages or settlements in the rural areas in which services are limited. In their studies they found, for example, that girls were often discouraged from going to school because the community believed that the upbringing of girls should be directed towards preparation for marriage.

Stevens (1989:81) mentions that in this type of area, boys were permitted to go to school until they passed standard one or three. They had to leave school when they were about to become men. He found that involvement of these types of community in school activities was well

below par, although both girls and boys nowadays were being encouraged to go to school to acquire necessary skills, knowledge and training.

#### *4.3.2.2 The moderately educated section*

This section of community is also found in both rural areas and in the towns. They are unlikely still to be living in the deep rural areas, although many do live in rural areas in the proximity of towns. Most of the community members have attended school up to grade eight. They know the importance of education for their children. Grové and Pieterse (1987:32) stated that slightly educated communities no longer rely so much on the traditional economic way of life of agriculture and pastoralism. A number of these work in distant urban areas like Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and other cities. Because of this they have ample opportunity to discuss the essence of education with other people who are knowledgeable about schooling. Socially they no longer hold earlier notions regarding the aged or the extended family. They encourage their children to go to school but do not themselves become involved in any school activities. They do regard it as important that they as parents should play an important role in the schooling of their children or show a particular preference about how the children should be educated. They believe that the teacher is in charge of the education of their children. This group tends not to realise that they could take a responsible part in their children's education. One could therefore say that the relationship between school and community remains unsatisfactory.

#### *4.3.2.3 The well educated section*

This section of the population is usually found in the better developed areas, where the infrastructure has been developed for some time, such as in the five towns Makwarela, Shayandima, Makhado, Vuwani and Thohoyandou in the area of the former Venda best known to the researcher. Most members of these communities are better educated because most of them have continued their education up to tertiary level. A number of them hold more than one degree. In addition they have become fully familiarised with Western civilisation and are therefore at home with the concepts and ideals of Western democracy. The community knows how to get involved in the education of their children. This category of person includes those who could be regarded as urbanised because they have lived for some time in a developed, urban environment. But the number who are truly urbanised compared with the population of large urban areas in South Africa is relatively small.

Parents in this group also do not send their children to local schools like Mahwasane, Mvudi, Muledane and Jim Tshivhonela. Instead they send them to Almighty schools, Haggai school and

Amarillo school which are private and multiracial schools. Parents feel compelled to improve the education of their children. It is this group of people who are expected to teach other groups about the necessity of being involved in the education of children (Stevens, 1989:81).

Urbanisation is a modern and recent trend in Northern Province. Many of the towns of Northern Province are situated in rural area far from other towns. Some towns are still small and underdeveloped and the majority of these town-dwellers do not live in developed, urban conditions. Many are poor or have only recently migrated to the towns, so their cultural orientation is still strongly rural. For this reason, although there are well and moderately well educated people in the community, they are a minority. The context of Northern Province is still strongly rural in character and the majority of the community still belongs to a rural outlook.

#### **4.4 PREVIOUS GOVERNING STRUCTURES OF EDUCATION IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE: THE EXAMPLE OF VENDA**

The example of Venda is used to illustrate the structures of school governance that applied to schools in the some areas of the Northern Province before the transition to democracy in 1994.

##### **4.4.1 School Committees**

Van Schalkwyk (1988:88) has said that a school committee, together with the principal of the educational institution and the parents' selected representatives, controls and manages the activities of the educational institution. It serves as the mouthpiece of the parents with regard to the physical and material matters of the institution. A school committee undertakes certain duties regarding the provision and maintenance of school groups, buildings and furniture and equipment and makes recommendations in this regard to the school board. Furthermore, it approves the utilisation of physical facilities after school hours, collects money to defray current expenditure, controls such funds and appoints a financial committee for this purpose. It carries out all the duties entrusted to it by the educational authorities.

But school committees in Venda did not operate according to the functions of school committees stipulated by Van Schalkwyk above, because most of the members of the school committee could not read or they were not informed about their functions in the school committee.

Therefore the school committee turned out to be a useless nodal structure between the school and the community.

According to the previous Venda Education Act, No. 3 of 1973 no person was to be elected as a member of a school committee if he or she:

- was under the age of twenty five years;
- was not a citizen of Venda;
- was of unsound mind and had been certified as such by any competent authority; or
- was a serving teacher or an officer in the service of the Department, or the wife of a serving teacher or of an officer.

The Act went on to stipulate the committees' functions as follows:

- (i) to bring to the notice of the circuit inspector any matter which in its opinion related to or affected the welfare or efficiency of such school, and/or hostel or grounds;
- (ii) to inquire into any complaint relating to such school or to any of its teachers and, if necessary, to refer such a complaint to the Circuit Inspector;
- (iii) to recommend to the Circuit Inspector that an enquiry be held if, in the said committee's opinion, the principal or any teacher of the staff :
  - (a) did not possess the required qualifications for his post; or
  - (b) was incapable of teaching efficiently owing to any physical or mental defect;
- (iv) to consider inspection reports and when necessary to make recommendations to the Circuit Inspector on any matter mentioned or arising from such reports;
- (v) to advise the Circuit Inspector and to make recommendation to the Inspector concerning all matters relating to the appointment of teachers at any school;
- (vi) to establish control and administer any school funds at the school;
- (vii) to be responsible for the supervision of the buildings and to report any state of disrepair in or damage to the school building which required urgent attention to the Tribal Authority without delay;
- (viii) to improve and maintain school grounds and fences in a proper state of repair.

Since members of the School Committees in Venda did not know their powers and duties, people in 1990 demanded that School Committees be abolished and replaced by a body that would include parents, teachers and students. In 1994, due to the pressure from the people, the previous Venda government introduced the body called Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) to be the nodal structure between schools and communities in Venda.



#### 4.4.2 Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs)

PTSAs were a response to pressure from grassroots to participate, when school committees fell into disrepute with the community and were abolished because of ineffectiveness.

Fouché (1991:85) gave the following as objectives for the Parent-Teacher-Student Association:

- promoting a mutual relationship and appreciation of one another through pleasant social contact;
- broadening the parents' knowledge of educational matters; and
- informing the parents about a variety of school matters such as school uniform, school funds and extra-mural activities.

According to the PTSA Constitution in Venda, its functions were as follows :

- to establish healthy relationships between schools and communities;
- to discuss and evaluate the progress of the students;
- to enable parents and teachers to discuss educational and other related problems with student representatives;
- to exchange views on matters such as raising children, home education, the hazards of drugs, social behaviour and career guidance;
- to assist the staff when asked with the extra-curricular activities of the school; and
- to address those matters which, in their opinion, hamper the progress of the student and which could benefit them.

In view of the above functions of a PTSA it was difficult for the members elected in a PTSA to operate effectively. The reason, again, was that most members of these PTSAs were illiterate. They did not know what their powers and functions in these bodies were. The effectiveness of these bodies was more or less similar to that of the abolished school committees. For these bodies to function successfully, members of these bodies needed to undergo extensive training organised by principals and the circuit office. Clearly it did not help to change the name of the structure to PTSA if the same problems remained.

This brief account of previous governing structures in schools in Venda illustrates that there was no established practice of well-organised governance. Neither the school committee system nor the PTSAs worked effectively. They did not have the support of the community.the rural areas



of Northern Province. If this was the case in Venda, which had advanced somewhat through taking independent status in 1979, it was not likely that the situation would be better in the case of the other former homelands, Lebowa and Gazankulu. The general conclusion of the researcher, then, is that community participation in schooling and school governance in general in the rural areas of Northern Province was very underdeveloped.

## **4.5 SUMMARY**

The context of the Northern Province was described by examining the development of education the region. Four stages in this development were identified, ranging from early missionary endeavours, followed by the centralisation of control of Black education under the system of Bantu Education, to a phase of decentralisation into regional homelands leading eventually to parallel systems of non-independent homelands alongside an independent Republic of Venda.

Secondly, the importance of the concept of community was discussed, showing that different levels of education, especially the lack of educational development, were one of the main features of the rural areas in Northern Province. A large proportion of parents from these communities were unwilling or unable to participate in the schooling of their children, e.g. through illiteracy.

A brief examination of previous school governing structures in the former Venda also showed the same problems of poor levels of participation by parents, leading to the lack of success of the both school committees and PTSAs as governance structures. This lack of participation seemed to be a form of underdevelopment that was typical of communities in largely rural areas of Northern Province.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SGBs IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN PROVINCE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

So far the study has completed three stages of investigation: an analysis of important concepts relevant to school governance; identification and discussion of the applicable policy and legal frameworks; and a description of the actual context of the largely rural Northern Province which is the focus of the researcher's concern. This chapter now reports on the final stage of the research, namely the empirical investigation of a selection of schools in that area.

The chapter briefly explains the method followed in this stage of the investigation. It then reports on the findings obtained from questionnaires and interviews with representatives of key stakeholder groups in SGBs in the selected schools. The second half of the chapter interprets the data, mainly aiming to evaluate the role of SGBs in these schools with a view to identifying problems, successes and areas for capacity building.

#### **5.2 RESEARCH METHOD**

##### **5.2.1 Research questions**

The researcher approached the research problem from the perspective of an educator who participates in the secondary school system of a largely rural area of Northern Province. He therefore commenced the study with an "insider" perspective of strong existing perceptions and guided by a desire to search for ways in which to improve the general performance of schools in the region. An underlying assumption in the study was that schools in the Northern Province could not be run effectively without the participation of a properly functioning school governing body. The ideal of a properly functioning SGB can be drawn from the conceptual and policy frameworks of Chapters 2 and 3, but the researcher felt that the main types of question the

research should ask were: how well do the stakeholders in school governance in these schools understand their expected roles? What is their perception of these roles? To what extent do the stakeholders perceive themselves to be effective in these roles? The purpose of the empirical study was therefore to extract information from representatives of the main stakeholder groups that would give answers to questions such as these.

### **5.2.2 Questionnaires and interviews**

As a teacher in one of the secondary schools in the study and as a member of the SGB, the researcher inevitably was able to obtain, through direct experience, important impressions that would help answer some of the questions suggested above. In addition, during the period covered by this investigation the researcher was privileged to run workshops in schools in the area, including sessions about school governance. These sessions contributed to the researcher's insight into the problem of the research. The workshops also widened the opportunities to interact with important stakeholders, more than would have been the case through interviews only. Therefore the research does not intend to indicate that the use of interviews, whether with individuals or in groups, provided in some way a more scientific or objective source of data. The interviews were primarily a way of ensuring that the same questions were systematically addressed to each of the stakeholder groups. The interviews were thus supplementary and complementary to the data obtained through these other interactions as well as through the researcher's own ongoing experience as a participant in these school communities.

The study nevertheless aimed in a more formal way to obtain its principal empirical data through the use of interviews. The researcher attempted to achieve a degree of uniformity as well as create the opportunity for diverse answers by combining both a structured and an unstructured approach to the interviews. This was done by distributing questionnaires at the selected schools, followed up by an interview with each group of stakeholders or representative individual, structured around the items in the questionnaire. The questionnaire gave an initial structure to the ground covered, but the researcher also encouraged interviewees to give responses that went beyond the rigid order of the questionnaire. The desirability of the use of an accountable questionnaire for a study of this nature is supported by evidence from a range of research resources. Mouldy (1978:230) has stated the indisputable: "If we want to know how people feel, what they experience and what they remember, what their emotions and motives are like and the reasons for acting as they do - why not ask them?" The present study wanted to do just that and therefore directed questionnaires to representatives of the following stakeholder groups:

principals, educators, non-educator staff, learner representatives and parents, including specifically chairpersons of SGBs. As directed by the SA Schools Act, this sample represents the population that comprises the main stakeholders in school governance who manage, organise, plan and make school policy.

The researcher did not have the resources to audio-tape the interviews, which is probably the most accurate way of recording data. Instead, during interviews conducted with the various respondent groups the researcher jotted down the required information as the interview proceeded. Mouldy (1978:206) strongly advocates this approach, insisting in addition that the desired information should be jotted down.

### **5.2.3 Sample**

The researcher selected 10 (ten) secondary schools of the former Department of Education and Training in the Northern Transvaal in Region 3. These schools were selected because of their proximity to the researcher's place of residence. Because of limited resources of time and transport the research sample had to be reasonably accessible. It is not easy to collect data from schools like these because the Northern Province is spread as wide as hope, through areas covering what used to be separated as Venda, the Transvaal Provincial Administration, Lebowa and Gazankulu. Without any intention to define categories of schools by formal criteria, the researcher has attempted to contrast the schools by suggesting how strongly rural in character each school was. To do this the terms "rural" and "deep rural" have been used in brackets, while the term "urban" is taken to indicate that a school is more strongly influenced by location close to or in the town. The ten secondary schools selected from this area were the following:

1. Gole Secondary School, with 450 students (rural)
2. Tshilala Secondary School, with 800 students (rural)
3. Thase Secondary School, with 300 students (rural)
4. Madadzhe Secondary School, with 250 learners (deep rural)
5. Funzwani Secondary School, with 920 learners (deep rural)
6. Fhatuwani Secondary School, with 1000 learners (deep rural)
7. Azwifarwi Secondary School, with 2000 learners (urban)
8. Eltivillas Combined Primary and Secondary School, with 1600 learners (urban)
9. Nwanati Secondary School, with 170 learners (rural)
10. Sam Mavhina Secondary School, with 1700 learners (urban/semi-rural)

Interviews were supported in the research through paraphrasing of the interviewee's expressed views and this enabled the interviewer to confirm the respondent's point of view. The first part of the interview protocol required participants to provide information with regard to the role of the school governing body in the public schools, especially in the Northern Province. The second part required the participants in the school governing bodies to state their interpretation of Section 20(1), section 21(1) a-e and section 24(1) a-c of the South African Schools Act.

The third part required participants to indicate their level of satisfaction with section 20 of the Act. Some problems that served as obstacles to the interview are listed below.

- Some questions were interpreted differently by the respondents.
- Question structure cued the interviewee to a possible desired response.
- The cost of applying the interview method was very high in terms of money, time and effort.

The following experiences were already mentioned in Chapter 1 as possible limitations on the research: some interviewees, especially principals, were reluctant to accept the interviewer before some free discussion had taken place. The reluctance could have stemmed from the respondent associating the interviews with inspection of some kind, especially since the interviews took place in the offices of the respective interviewees. It was nevertheless found that the use of the questionnaire enabled the interviewer to consolidate the interview and the questionnaire helped to make the findings more practicable and reliable.

The schools were visited and analysed, the educational environment in particular. In conclusion, it may be asserted that, although the unstructured aspects of the interview offered some difficulties, especially in recording very individualistic information, this approach also gave flexibility that is an advantage that cannot be over-emphasised. This form of interview also enabled the researcher to achieve a co-operative atmosphere with the informants that probably produced more information than other procedures might have done. It was also felt that this interaction gave the interviewer the chance to probe and test responses in a way that probably ensured a greater truthfulness in the responses given. This method was therefore found by the researcher to be highly fruitful.

Anderson (1990:247) suggests that the analysis of data from an interview, especially a group interview, should take place soon after the group session is concluded. Referring to other writers

on the subject, Anderson notes that in qualitative research it is regarded as important to integrate the process of data analysis as closely as possible with the stage of data collection.

The responses of participants were separated into greater ideas and other minor ideas were also grouped and sometimes related to greater ideas. Throughout the analysis of data, consideration was given to the words used, and the context which gave rise to those words. This followed an approach advised by Anderson (1990:243).

#### **5.2.4 The role of the researcher**

The role of the researcher in this qualitative research design was that of primary data collection. The instrument of this research necessitated that the biases, values and assumptions of the researcher be identified at the outset of the study. Most writers comment on the importance in qualitative studies of explicitly identifying and examining personal values, assumptions and biases.

The researcher's perception of school governing body views about school management was shaped by personal experience. At the time of the study, the researcher had been a member of a school governing body for more than 3 years. As a member of a school governing body, the researcher became familiar with the role of SGBs as the core of school governance and effective management. As such, he perceived that parents, learners, educators, principals and non-educators were always keen to participate in the management of the public secondary schools in the Northern Province. But the subjective view of the researcher, as a participant observer, was that parents were not satisfied with their role in the governing bodies in public secondary schools. From the outset of the study, it was therefore a definite outlook of the researcher to find that parents wanted to be allowed to take a more active role. The researcher expected that one aspect that would need to be probed was whether, for example, principals and educators in any way specifically encouraged or discouraged parental participation.

### **5.3 INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

The researcher conducted interviews at 10 different secondary schools in Louis Trichardt, Thohoyandou, Mutale and Malamulele, where school governing bodies have been established from 1997 to the present. Besides principals, educators, non-educators and parents, a total of

seventy youths (30 females and 40 males) from these ten schools was involved as representative of the learner component. Follow-up interviews with 20 (twenty) youths from schools in Region 3 of the Northern Province were also conducted.

### **5.3.1 Interviews with Principals**

The ten principals of the visited secondary schools confirmed that, in their view, democratic school governing bodies had been established in their schools. They all held the view that the election process had been correctly conducted, in accordance with the South African Schools Act of 1996. These principals also expressed the opinion that it was valid to make the generalisation for the Northern Province as a whole that SGBs had in fact been properly established at all schools in Northern Province, even though all were not established at the same time. Further information indicates that the overwhelming majority of school principals acted as the electoral officer, as prescribed by the department. Similarly in accordance with the Act, it would appear that most schools notified stakeholders at least three weeks before the election, as required by the regulations.

In this specific sample, however, principals at seven schools reported that parents were not notified and this may be attributed to the rural location of some schools, lack of adequate postal services in some areas or even the possibility that the department's instructions arrived very late, if at all. Principals indicated that separate meetings were held for the election of parents and for the election of educators. The situation for non-educators was that most schools apparently did not hold a separate election for this stakeholder group because, it was reported, the majority (75%) of the schools could not do this because no non-educators (clerical staff, general assistants, etc.) were employed at the particular schools.

When asked whether they could report on specific problems in the functioning of SGBs, there was no clear trend. Some principals indicated that problems were encountered regarding the role of the school governing body in the Northern Province, but many principals indicated that they had not encountered any problems. The two most pressing problems that arose involved:

- poor attendance at the parent election meetings (regardless of the fact that parents had been informed in good time);
- reluctance on the part of parents to stand for election; and
- feelings of insecurity, lack of appreciation for the importance of parental involvement in education.



Respondents amongst the principals expressed concern at the indifference exhibited amongst parents in rural and urban schools. Most of the principals in public secondary schools in the Northern Province indicated that they believe they have an important leadership role to play since they are responsible for the day-to-day management of the school. They are giving input to the governing body about the professional matters and the needs of the schools. But some principals feel incompetent because they were not trained to be administrators of schools. Together with the governing body, principals responded that they have to maintain standards by selecting appropriate staff, using finances effectively and instilling proper discipline in schools.

All the principals expressed the view that it is their responsibility to train members of school governing bodies on how to run meetings. Principals in the disadvantaged communities of Thase, Gole, Tshilala and Sam Mavhina secondary schools reported that they must provide a lot of guidance and motivation because most parents are semi-literate; parent representatives on the governing bodies relied heavily on the principals' leadership when making decisions about the school.

Principals from various schools identified the following as areas where a lack of competence needs to be addressed:

- role clarification and functions;
- budgeting and fundraising;
- teamwork;
- drafting a code of conduct; and
- creating good relationships between the governing body and educators.

### **5.3.2 Interviews with Educators**

All educators represented were unanimous that school governing bodies have been established according to departmental regulations and that elections had been democratic and fair. It is significant therefore that both principals and educators view the establishment of SGBs as legitimate and acceptable.

Educators' responses did show an interesting area of criticism, however. They suggested that principals fail to report back correctly or completely to the whole staff and they state that this is bound to create tension among the staff. Educators also feel that principals do not welcome their

presence when it comes to the management of the schools. Principals often view the participation of educators in the management of the school as an erosion of their authority. The perception was strong that educators generally felt that they are not seen by school management as active agents who should be encouraged to innovate and seek to introduce change. Owens (1981:33) defines management in the school as a bureaucratic institution in which authority relationships are hierarchically arranged. It seemed clear from the interviews with educators that the kind of shared participation required in governance presents a challenge to the more hierarchical principal-educator relationships that have become institutionalised in schools through traditional approaches to school administration in South Africa. Principals actually seem to feel threatened by educator participation.

Most respondents reported that there had been no problems with any of the elections. But it was reported that elections were nevertheless characterised by poor parent turnout in some cases and educators were very concerned about this. Whether or not their own school had had a well-attended election, most respondents had views about what makes a successful election. Most educator representatives attribute the success of elections to:

- the influential role of principals in explaining electoral procedures to various participants;
- the preparatory work done by NGO's and trade unions, particularly SADTU, PEU and NAPTOSA in training their members to serve on civic and educational structures; and
- the clarity of the Department's instructions (e.g. circulars or policy directives).

When questioned about their function or role as educator representatives, the majority (93%) reported that they see themselves as liaising between fellow educators and the school governing body or as a link between the broader body of educators and parents. Educator representatives at all ten schools indicated that their colleagues viewed their role as very important. They are seen as representatives of the educator corps, as presenters of educator problems to the school governing body. They indicated that the staff saw these representatives as a channel of access to the decision-making process in the school, i.e. as a widening of power for educators.

Specifically, the educator representatives view their role as:

- representing the interest of their colleagues;
- making the governing body aware of educators' perceptions; and
- bringing educator problems to the attention of the school governing body.

One educator from the schools mentioned above responded specifically that his task was to guide and direct the parent component, which he felt was essentially illiterate, with regard to issues such as budgeting, fundraising and bookkeeping. On the whole, educator representatives seemed most conscious of their responsibilities towards their constituency of fellow educators. There was not a significant sense of obligation to assist in developing the capacities of the parent body.

### **5.3.3 Interviews with non-educators**

There was a widely held conviction among all the interviewees from the different stakeholder groups that governing bodies had been properly established and that they had been elected democratically as per departmental regulations. However, only one school in the sample of ten in the Northern Province had non-educator representatives. It became evident in the interviews with different stakeholder that there was no common understanding of the term non-educators. At some schools cleaners and security guards of firms contracted by the Department were not regarded as non-educators and had been excluded from the election but at other schools these contracted workers were included and available for election as non-educator representatives on the governing body. Rural schools have no non-educator representation in the school governing body of public secondary schools. One respondent seemed to imply that certain categories of employee were not even considered to be eligible, by indicating that most of the school workers were semi-literate and not very conversant with English.

In an attempt to overcome this lack of elected non-educator representatives within in the sample, the researcher made opportunities to speak to other non-educators employed at the schools in the sample, even though they were not on GSBs. Although these interviews were not along the lines of those conducted with members of SGBs, they were a way of finding some information on the perceptions of non-educator staff about the role of SGBs.

Problems about SGBs identified by non-educators were the following:

- Participation is difficult because both parents work away from home.
- They are not interested in school matters.
- They are untrained in participatory democracy and lack self-confidence.
- They have transport problems because they reside far from the schools.
- African non-educators are reluctant to be elected because it is difficult for them to attend evening and/or Saturday meetings.

Most non-educators expressed the need for workshops and training to be conducted in order for them to obtain clarity about their roles. They wanted the following matters to be addressed to assist them in their role as members of school governing bodies of public secondary schools:

- staff selection procedures;
- learner disciplinary procedures; and
- fundraising.

Obviously these are significant areas of concern to non-educators and need to be addressed within the structure of school governance. This requires, in the first place that there is proper representation of non-educators on SGBs, something that this investigation showed to be seriously lacking.

#### **5.3.4 Interviews with members of Learner Representative Councils (LRCs)**

According to Section 11 of the South African Schools Act (1996), a Representative Council of Learners (LRC) must be established at every public school enrolling learners in the eighth grade and higher. The respondents indicated that the LRCs elected one or two members to the governing body, depending on the school's enrolment. In the Northern Province the learner population in secondary schools is given as somewhat more than half of all learners (58%). This research was conducted in Region 3 of the province, a region in which there are, however, relatively few secondary schools. At these schools the LRC had held between three and five meetings since their establishment.

In the sample of ten secondary schools only eight had learner representation on the governing body. The explanation given by a principal for the governing body having no learner representatives was that the school only had classes up to grade 10. There was no LRC and no learner representation on the governing body at the particular school. This situation is in contravention of the Schools Act that states that LRCs must be established in secondary schools and that learners from grade eight can be elected to the governing body. Despite this irregularity, however, a number of the interviewees felt that principals had actually facilitated the process in a positive way by providing information to learners in their schools about why and how governing bodies would be established.

The majority of interviews revealed that no problems had been encountered in the establishment of governing bodies. One respondent cited poor attendance and late arrival at meetings as

problems. Most interviewees felt that information shared via circulars and an explanation by the principal of the purpose, functions and the procedure to be followed in establishing governing bodies had helped to facilitate the election process. Good planning and organisation, familiarity with the democratic process through experience on structures such as Parent-Teacher Associations, Parent-Teacher-Student Associations, Governing Councils and School Committees, as well as harmony between the various stakeholders, were given as facilitating factors. All interviewees indicated that there had been no capacity building for governing body members as yet.

A common response from learners was that they indicated that they lack the necessary skills for effective participation. They specifically identified a need for instruction in the following:

- learning about meeting procedures;
- drafting a constitution and code of conduct;
- clarification of roles;
- correct record keeping; and
- how to manage finances and fund raising.

### **5.3.5 Interviews with parents**

One parent at each of the ten secondary schools, in most cases the chairpersons of the governing body, was interviewed.

Interviewees confirmed that although governing bodies had been properly elected, they often were not functioning at all. A reason frequently given for this was that most of the parents in the school governing bodies were semi-literate. Although parent representation on governing bodies was predominantly male, there was a small percentage of females and at one school the entire parent component was female. This was an exception. Gender composition of SGBs might be an important aspect to investigate further in evaluating the role and functioning of SGBs, but this was not specifically planned to be part of this research.

It was easy to obtain information about the level of education of parent representatives. However, there was evidence that most of the present representatives in the Northern Province are lowly qualified. It became clear that parents elected to the school governing bodies of rural secondary schools often had only primary school education.

Most parents responded that they had encountered problems in the early stages of establishing school governing bodies, but three schools out of ten indicated that they had not experienced problems. In areas where there had been problems, the following reasons were given for the problems experienced by the school governing bodies of rural schools:

- reluctance of nominees to stand for election, citing reasons of age and workload, and
- poor attendance at election meetings.

At Azwifarwi Secondary School, with an enrolment of 2000 learners, only about 100 parents attended the election meeting. One interviewee ascribed these problems to general apathy and/or reluctance to participate in and take responsibility for community structures.

Respondents claimed that they addressed these problems by lobbying and pressurising key individuals and reminding parents of the deadline for the establishment of an effective school governing body. A high number of interviewees indicated that they did not encounter problems because of the following, in their view:

- The idea of school governing bodies had generally been well received.
- Parents had actively taken advantage of the opportunity provided by the Schools Act to participate in school governance.

Interviewees responded that previous experience on structures like PTSAs, PTAs, Model C school governing bodies, governing council and school committees facilitated the involvement of parents in the school governing bodies.

The researcher felt that it was of particular importance to assess the perception of parents about the essential function of a school governing body and about how they saw the role specifically of parents.

#### *5.3.5.1 Parent perception of the role of governing bodies.*

The parents interviewed gave a strong impression that they recognised that SGBs should take responsibility for the overall well-being of the school and that these responsibilities covered a spectrum of key functions. Their responses with regard to the responsibilities of school governing bodies identified the following:

- managing finances;
- selecting suitable staff;
- fund raising;



- motivating parents to pay school fees;
  - maintaining resources;
  - maintaining standards of teaching and learning;
  - establishing a suitable environment for learning; and
- encouraging parents to participate in school activities and solve problems, e.g. disciplinary problems.

These responses indicated that parents have some understanding of the functions of the governing body and these correlated with the functions stated in Section 20 and 21 of the Schools Act. However, some interviewees from disadvantaged communities indicated a desire for capacity building because they were unsure about their role.

#### *5.3.5.2 The role of parents in school governance*

The majority of respondents felt that, as parents, they had a meaningful role to play on the governing body of public secondary schools, whether rural or urban. Parents mentioned the following examples of their involvement:

- participation in decision making;
- participation in the maintenance of the school building and facilities;
- participation in the management of funds and fund-raising.

Most parents serving on school governing bodies in the sample had some level of formal education but this was wide-ranging from primary to postgraduate qualifications. The responses indicated that 53% of the members of governing bodies were literate. This suggested that parents were electing literate people whom they regarded as knowledgeable and experienced and who they expected would contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning at the school by serving on the governing bodies. Among those interviewed, however, there was a general view expressed that the SGBs of urban secondary schools functioned more effectively or efficiently while SGBs of rural secondary schools did not function as effectively or efficiently because the members of these governing bodies were semi-literate. Thus among members of the community in rural and semi-rural areas such as those which constituted this study, literacy is widely assumed to be one of the main qualifications for membership of a SGB and the levels of literacy among members of a SGB an indicator of whether the SGB will be effective.



## **5.4 INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

The section above summarises the findings of the research through the interviews with representatives of the relevant stakeholders in SGBs. This section turns now to an interpretation of and reflection on the data.

In general, it should be noted at the outset that the researcher found that there was a great willingness to participate in the investigation and interviewees from all stakeholder groups provided a variety of valuable insights into how they saw the role and functioning of the SGB as well as how they saw their own roles as members.

### **5.4.1 Some general trends**

There was a great deal of agreement or overlap in the information provided by interviewees. Some main areas of consensus will first be discussed before turning to other specific concerns.

#### **Election and setting up of SGBs**

Overall there seemed to be a very positive view of the process of establishing SGBs. Participants from all groups seemed to regard SGBs as being strongly legitimate, as having been properly set up in accordance with what was required by official policy. They largely agreed that the proper processes had been followed as regards sending out the required notification and the actual conducting of the elections (such as the principals acting as electoral officers). This does, however, seem to contradict the specific statements made by a number of interviewees in response to precise questioning that proper notices did not in fact go out to parents at all schools. It seemed from this that interviewees wanted to present positive views about SGBs but were not always willing to make accurate constructive criticism of aspects of the organisation. This lack of criticism was possibly also a result of not being fully aware of exactly what the regulations required. Nevertheless, it indicated that people tended to agree about a positive opinion rather than disagree in case criticism seemed to undermine a positive outlook or imply disunity, even disloyalty.

It is interesting to note that at no point did any interviewee from any stakeholder group state or imply that elections had not been honest, free and open. No-one suggested any mistrust of the election process or of people involved.

Separate elections for the different stakeholder representatives seemed to have been carried out properly in most cases, in particular for educators and parents. The two main problems that became evident were:

- (a) in many schools *non-educators* were not represented, mainly because they were not properly defined and identified as a group in the schools in these rural and semi-rural areas;
- (b) in some schools principals seemed to have excluded *learners* from SGBs because they were not in Grade 11 or 12, in contradiction to the legal stipulation that learners from Grade 8 upwards should be represented. In some such schools there was not even a LRC.

## **Participation**

All interviewees spoke of poor attendance and apathy. Poor turn-outs at elections were reported as well as poor attendance and late arrival at meetings.

Principals, educators and parents all agreed that parents were often unwilling to make themselves available for election. It was reported that many parents were insecure, felt themselves to be inadequate or unskilled or seemed not to be interested in exercising their rights to participate. Some principals and educators said that parents in rural communities were apathetic. But a number of those interviewed expressed the view that where the principal communicated effectively this situation could be changed. Some even blamed the inadequacy of the principal for poor turnout. It is interesting to note that many interviewees suggested that better communication was the key to improvement in levels of participation. It would appear that this improvement needs to come, firstly, from the department, by giving more basic information and encouragement about the functioning and activities of SGBs, and secondly, perhaps mostly, within the school community - from the principal.

Although this aspect was not actively investigated during the research, the researcher found that females were very underrepresented on SGBs. Reasons for this should be explored in further research. The gender composition of SGBs is a topic that could also be included in training information distributed to schools and governing bodies.

## **Role and functions**

It appeared from the data that many interviewees felt that once elected, SGBs did not get going with effective functioning. This criticism was especially heard from parent representatives.

Educators showed a very strong sense of awareness of their function to represent fellow educators in matters affecting them. On the whole educators seemed to show a good understanding of the SA Schools Act and to understand the purposes of governance at school level. The study showed that educators definitely experience a sense of having greater power to express their views and take part in decision-making. Some expressed the view that principals were not always happy with this situation. Some principals did not communicate information from the SGB to staff members and wanted to keep or control information. This was identified by some educators as a potential source of conflict in schools, especially where principals struggled to move away from traditional management styles of hierarchical authority.

Despite the above, representatives from all stakeholder groups showed awareness of the range of functions that the SA Schools Act expects SGBs to perform, ranging from finances to discipline and staff appointments. But, on this point, almost all those interviewed admitted that they needed much help and capacity building. It appears that the whole process of policy-making and decision-making needs to be better explained and learned.

There was an overall strong support for any forms of capacity building. Even members of LRCs felt strongly that they could learn much from workshops or even circulars from the Education Department or from other organisations. The researcher definitely observed a positive desire from all stakeholders to learn more about their possible role and about how to function more effectively.

#### **5.4.2 Encouraging factors**

Most of the stakeholders felt that information shared via circulars, radio talks, educational documents and explanations by the principal of the purpose, functions and the procedure to be followed for establishing governing bodies had helped to facilitate the election process. Good planning, organisation, emphasizing of the democratic process, past knowledge or experience in structures such as PTAs or PTSAs, Governing Bodies and school committees, as well as harmony between various stakeholders, were also mentioned as facilitating factors. This suggested to the researcher that there was a growing awareness and experience of what might be called a culture of democracy.

Educator representatives at most schools attributed the success of elections to:

- a previous culture of school committees, especially in the former Republic of Venda, Department of Education and Training (DET), Gazankulu and Lebowa governments;
- the preparatory work done by NGOs and trade unions, particularly the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), in training their members to serve on educational structures;
- the influential role of principals in explaining electoral procedures to the various components;
- the clarity of the Department's instructions.

Experience in previous governance structures and information sharing with the principal, superintendents of education and colleagues in former school committees and former 'model C' schools had also facilitated the process of establishing governing bodies.

#### **5.4.3 Problems encountered**

The majority of people in the Northern Province indicated that they had not encountered any problems in the establishment of governing bodies. As mentioned, most of the stakeholders cited poor attendance and late arrival at meetings as problems. However, it appeared to be the case that these problems were addressed by the governing bodies. Some were of the view that problems occurred because learners did not properly understand the South African Schools Act.

Elections at a number of schools were characterised by poor parent turnout and educators are concerned about this.

- The poor response by parents is a gigantic problem for all selected schools in the Northern Province.
- Convenors are perturbed about the response from parents in terms of their actual interest.
- To get nominations was also a problem.

There is a perception that there is no need for non-educators to be on the governing body because most issues discussed at meetings are of an academic and financial nature and therefore assumed to be outside the normal range of interest to non-educators. As far as they are concerned this had very little to do with them. Most of the non-educators are illiterate in the Northern Province and could not follow certain issues and languages used in meetings.

Seven principals claimed that they had not encountered problems and the others stated their most pressing problems were:

- poor attendance at the parent election meeting regardless of the fact that they had been informed in good time, and
- reluctance to stand for election.

Principals ascribed the latter problem to feelings of insecurity and lack of appreciation for the importance of parental involvement in the education.

#### **5.4.4 Capacity building and training**

It was clear that there was a great hunger among some of the stakeholders to receive significant, organised capacity building for governing body members. Learners, for example, lacked necessary skills for effective participation.

In this regard, this research also confirmed that the Education Department had indeed made meaningful efforts to provide capacity building: several interviewees specifically mentioned the training session for governing bodies in the Northern Province, organised by the department. SADTU also conducted a workshop for its members, but of those interviewed, only six schools had been able to send representatives because of the limitation on numbers set by SADTU. Educator representatives from the former Venda Republic, DET, the Gazankulu and the Lebowa governments even went so far as to say that they felt that there was no need for capacity building. This, they explained, was because they already had experience and the parent component consisted of competent people who were professionals in their own right. They were on top of their jobs and were doing a good job in the school governing body. However these schools were in the minority. Schools that are far away from Pietersburg and Louis Trichardt felt strongly that there was a need for capacity building. Educator representatives stated that they felt there was a need for greater clarity regarding functions and roles. They suggested training in meeting procedures because parents, educators and learners were not familiar with these.

Educator representatives also wanted information on basic school management, including financial management. Educators requested training in resolving disputes between principals and parents, principals and educators and educators and learners. They said they needed training on how a mission statement is written. They also needed knowledge for writing minutes, keeping records, problem solving, drawing up a constitution, formulating a code of conduct, and setting up a budget.

The majority of interviewees were in favour of capacity building in view of the fact that governing bodies are new structures. Principals felt that, in the absence of workshops, clear and well-documented guidelines from the Department would suffice. At the time this research was being completed, the Department of Education was providing workshops to all senior educators and principals. Principals had attended a mini-workshop for principals conducted by the NGO project Kgotolo Pele, that guided them through the election procedures and explained the criteria for determining school fees. Generally, however, there was strong agreement that principals, non-educators, parents and learners need and would strongly value much more ongoing training.

In summary, the following list indicates the priorities most commonly identified by stakeholders as specific aspects that needed to be addressed through training by way of focused workshops, training sessions or circulars:

- Team work
- Drafting a constitution
- Drafting a code of conduct
- Budgeting and fundraising
- Role clarification and functions
- Creating good relationships between the governing body and educators
- Defining and drawing up school policies in general.

#### **5.4.5 Activities of governing bodies**

One aspect probed in the interviews was how SGBs ran their meetings. How regular were meetings? What were the procedures? What sorts of business did they cover?

All interviews showed that at least four meetings had been held and office bearers had been elected at the first meeting. Most schools stated that they were still drafting constitutions. Some had received guidelines from the Department while some were working in groups to assist one another. Interviewees indicated that the Department of Education provided examples of a suitable constitution. Some of the schools had also got as far as adopting a code of conduct for learners.

Stakeholders indicated not only that office bearers had been elected and that meetings were held regularly, but also that minutes had been recorded and circulated or had been written in minute books and read at the beginning of each meeting. Concerning the adoption of a code of conduct

for learners, most schools indicated that they were still working on this. A few governing bodies had already adopted a code of conduct with acceptance from the majority of learners at the school. In most schools, troublesome learners were cited as being the ones reluctant to accept the code of conduct. In a number of schools, Learner Representative Council (LRC) meetings to report back to their members were held soon after governing body meetings. One LRC kept an attendance register that noted class representatives that do not attend.

By law, school governing bodies are expected to meet at least once per term, although most schools reported that they had held more meetings because of the need to get the ball rolling. Most representatives (67%) interviewed indicated that they were still in the process of drafting a constitution or had drafted one for submission to the Department for ratification and adoption.

Although requests for training in recording minutes of meetings were made by educator representatives, all ten schools indicated that minutes were nevertheless being recorded and that each member of the school governing body received a copy.

Schools used different methods to inform educators about school governing body decisions. These included staff meetings chaired by the principal, formal report-back meetings to parents, chaired by the chairperson of the SGB, report back meetings to learners chaired by the president of the LRC, and circulars of important decisions and printed copies of minutes for each educator. The researcher found that in a few cases minute books were used.

#### **5.4.6 Matters on school agendas**

Most school agendas included items such as the following:

- Disciplinary cases
- School security
- Changes to code of conduct
- School maintenance
- Reports by the principal and sub-committees
- School projects
- Academic results of learners (standards of achievement of the school).

From the interviews, it became clear to the researcher that there was potentially a matter of contention over who drafted the agenda for SGB meetings. Clearly drawing up the agenda



influences what matters are discussed. It would be proper if guidance given as part of capacity building to SGBs also discussed this aspect. SGB members from all stakeholder groups need to be helped to understand that all members have a right to raise matters for the agenda. But how this should be done in practice needs to be worked out. There have to be well-defined and workable procedures.

#### **5.4.7 Finance and fundraising**

The handling of school finances appeared to be the most sensitive and controversial area of concern to some of the interviewees. Some members were not satisfied with how the new governing bodies handled finances, even though they saw SGBs as better governance structures than their forerunners. They agreed that governing bodies were more legitimate, democratic and transparent than previous structures had been in that they included all stakeholders and provided a forum for input from different perspectives. But there was clearly a desire among stakeholders to be given more insight into how the school's finances were managed.

In some cases, great distrust was expressed. This could become a source of serious conflict and upset the smooth running and teamwork of SGBs. For example, some of those interviewed were critical of incidents where the principal or school treasurer (most of the treasurers are educators) had made decisions to spend school funds on goods or projects that had not been in the budget approved by the SGB.

Some interviewees expressed concern about the suddenness of giving responsibility to governing bodies for the maintenance of schools because they lacked experience in handling these matters. They said that this kind of authoritarian attitude reflected past attitudes and was contradictory to the notion of participatory democracy underpinning school governance.

Concern about how to increase the school's financial resources appeared from the survey to be a major issue. Stakeholders expressed a need to have a say in decisions about how to raise funds as well as about how to allocate or spend the available resources. From this it can be deduced that capacity building will be helpful not only to assist SGBs about drawing up budgets and keeping financial records, but also about how to generate additional funds. Also the principle of accountability to the school community seems to need much more emphasis, or else the community will be unwilling to support school fund-raising.

#### **5.4.8 The principal's responsibility for the professional management of the school**

The important difference between governance and management is not always well understood by the stakeholders. Governance, or power, is delegated at the level of the local school to the SGB. The SA Schools Act takes care to show that the principal's role is different from that of governance, i.e. the principal does not have the capacity to "govern" the school, although he or she is an important member *ex officio* of the SGB. The Schools Act stipulates that it is the professional management of a public school that must be undertaken by the principal, under the authority of the Head of the Department of Education, who can expect co-operation and compliance from the principal in matters of school management. The Act stipulates that the governing body must help and support the principal, educators and other staff at the school in the performance of their professional functions. The principal of the school is a manager and should be supported and guided by departmental officials with regard to matters such as the interpretation, implementation and execution of departmental instructions.

Few of these functions can be managed single-handed, so in a democratic environment one would expect that many of these functions to be performed co-operatively or by delegation, but they remain the responsibility of the principal as manager.

In the survey conducted, the parents interviewed appeared to be very supportive of the principal's responsibility to manage the academic affairs of the school. Other than the stakeholders' concern, mentioned in the previous section, to share more direct responsibility in the school's finances, there were also examples of stakeholders, especially parents, wanting to contribute ideas to help run other areas of schools. Some parents expressed interest and concern about curriculum matters; others wanted to become involved in maintenance and cleaning of the schools; some were interested in sport and other extra-curricular activities. The important message here is that SGBs need guidance about how to facilitate stakeholders' legitimate interests in the overall quality of the school without invading the principal's management responsibilities.

#### **5.4.9 The significance of the rural context**

Lastly it is essential to reflect on any data that might have specific bearing on the largely rural context of this investigation. As has already been suggested, rural education has traditionally been associated with conditions of deprivation and disadvantage. Nash (1989:41) has described

the whole range of practical and intellectual problems that can contribute to the underdevelopment and isolation of schools in rural areas compared with their urban counterparts.

It was not within the scope of this research to examine such disadvantages or their causes, but it was very significant how much the interviewees stressed the problem of illiteracy in the community as one of the main reasons for parental apathy or lack of participation in school governance. The repeated main problem reported by all stakeholders was of parental lack of participation, based on inadequacy, reluctance, illiteracy and lack of knowledge about how the school functioned. Clearly underdeveloped communities need to be exposed to deliberate programmes of empowerment to help them make the most of opportunities like SGBs to develop a more meaningful democratic culture in South Africa.

The research revealed that learners quickly realised what the significance of their role in school governing bodies was when they understand the connection between the struggle for democracy in the past and the present need to broaden democracy. Because the SA Schools Act requires that Learners Representative Councils be established in secondary schools, learners have a more definite function because they have a greater say in fundamental policy matters. However, learners are still sometimes not aware of this role because their principals have not clarified it in terms of their function.

This study showed that there is a great potential for SGBs to develop into democratic institutions in the local community if the obstacles of illiteracy and inadequacy can be overcome. The State, educators, parents, learners, private sector and members of the governing body must all accept their responsibilities to make the education system work as well as possible. Learners in public schools in the Northern Province should become fully involved in school governance. SGBs should actively plan programmes to develop and involve the parent community in the overall educational life of schools in rural and semi-rural areas as a step towards fuller participation in actual school governance.

The weak recognition given to the role of non-educators could also be ascribed to aspects of the rural context, in which non-educator staff were simply seen as among the least literate and not even considered as eligible for election. There is a need for SGBs to explore meaningful roles for non-educators in the SGB, despite their possible illiteracy. Some non-educators can play an important role with regard to student discipline because they are closer to the learners than the

educators. Non-educators often see learners doing wrong things. Non-educators are part and parcel of the governing body.

The interviews showed that principals tended to see the need to maintain their authority as managers, while educator representatives saw themselves primarily as representing the interests of educators in the school. But another prominent role of the educator representative as well as the principal is to guide and direct the parent component because most of them are illiterate with regard to issues such as budgeting, fundraising and bookkeeping. This must be looked at positively so that the educator representatives' willingness to assist parents can make school governing bodies work successfully. Based on this study, the researcher sees this educative, developmental role of the principal and educators as one of unique importance in the effective running of SGBs in largely rural communities. This task may therefore be significantly different to their counterparts in urban schools, who work with developed or industrialised modern parent communities.

## **5.5 SUMMARY**

This chapter dealt with the last stage of the investigation into the role and functioning of SGBs in rural areas of the Northern Province, i.e. the empirical investigation of a sample of 10 schools in Region 3, in the Thohoyandou area. Using questionnaires and interviews, as well as information gained from running workshops and his own experience as an educator in the region, the researcher obtained data from representatives of the five relevant stakeholder groups on SGBs in secondary schools: principals, educators, non-educators, learners and parents.

The findings from interviews with each group were summarised and analysed. In interpreting the findings, some general trends were noted, as well as specific problems and successes. The importance of capacity-building was highlighted and key areas for development identified. The overall need was stressed for specific programmes aimed at overcoming the barriers to participation in school governance caused by illiteracy and underdevelopment. This problem appeared to be a particularly dominant characteristic of rural and semi-rural communities and was therefore a very significant finding of this study.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 SUMMARY

The Republic of South Africa has a past in which there was a great deal of inequality and poverty. The overall aim of national policies since the transition to democracy in April 1994 has been to bring about a more equitable society based on democratic values, rights and practices. Schools are expected to play an important role in promoting democratic change not only by the way they teach but also by the way they are run. As part of the policy changes to put democracy into practice, the SA Schools Act (1996) provided the legislative framework for communities to participate in the governance of their local schools, through the election of representatives of the key stakeholder groups in education.

This research study aimed to analyse the role of school governing bodies in rural areas of the Northern Province. The region on which the research focused was one that had been politically and educationally divided and in which the majority of the population were Black people living in largely rural areas. The overall characteristic of these areas and communities was of relative underdevelopment, poverty and educational disadvantage prior to 1994. Illiteracy was also at high levels in the deeply rural areas. As an educator resident in this region, the researcher had a strong conviction that well-functioning SGBs were a key to effective schools and therefore eventually to social and economic development of the region. He therefore had a lively interest to discover whether SGBs were well established and playing a constructive role in this region.

Chapter 1 presented an introductory perspective on this research question, stating why SGBs were important to democratic transformation, giving a description of the problem and identifying specific questions that would orientate the study. These questions could be summed up as being to establish whether SGBs were in fact established in the region studies, how well stakeholders understood the policies that defined their function as SGBs, what perceptions the stakeholders had of their roles and responsibilities and how well these SGBs were actually functioning. From this investigation it was hoped to find out what problems needed to be addressed and what

actions would improve the running of SGBs in the region. The introductory chapter also explained that the study focused particularly on rural because of the problems and needs unique to such communities. The method of research and structure of the report was also described, as well as some of the constraints and limitations of the study.

The method of the study unfolded through the arrangement of chapters, moving from more theoretical analysis, to the policy context and the geographic or regional context, before turning to the empirical investigation of SGBs in specific schools in Northern Province.

Three chapters provided three separate perspectives on the research topic. The first perspective or context was theoretical, in the form of a conceptual clarification (Chapter 2), making use of a literature study to identify and define more closely the main concepts relevant to the study of school governance. The second context examined the framework of legislation and policy documents (Chapter 3) that define school governance in South Africa, especially the SA Constitution and to the SA Schools Act, both enacted during 1996. Other documents relevant to school governance in the RSA were also identified, including the particular legislation applicable to the Northern Province.

The third perspective or context was regional, i.e. the Northern Province (Chapter 4). The chapter described the region in some detail, firstly dividing the patterns of educational governance of the last two centuries into four historical periods, prior to the transition to democratic government with a single national education system. The researcher also highlighted the meaning and importance of the concept of community in the rural context of Northern Province. Finally he referred to the example of education under the former Venda to illustrate briefly how education had been organised immediately prior to 1994 in this region.

Chapter 5 reported on the empirical focus of the investigation. As a resident and educator in the area, the researcher already possessed a wealth of insider knowledge, based on his actual experience in schools and as a member of a SGB. Using questionnaires and interviews the researcher aimed to amplify and consolidate his existing knowledge of the role and functioning of SGBs in the region. The chapter therefore explained the researcher's method and sample selection to obtain the data for evaluation. The main approach was to interview representatives from the five main groups identified by the SA Schools Act as stakeholders in governance in secondary schools, namely principals, educators, non-educator staff, learners and parents. Data



collected from these interviews was analysed and evaluated to find important trends, encouraging signs, problems and areas for capacity-building.

## 6.2 CONCLUSIONS

The investigation aimed to assess the role of SGBs. When the study was completed the researcher identified many important questions that could have been asked more clearly or which would serve as a basis for further research. Based on the experience of this investigation, the researcher reached the conclusion that it was important to divide this idea of a role into more specific aspects. The first conclusion, then, is to suggest that "role" could be analysed under headings such as the following:

- ❑ The existence of SGBs: Have they actually been set up? Did the election process take place successfully? Are SGBs seen as legitimate by the community and stakeholders? Are school communities and stakeholders familiar with the relevant legislation and policy documents, such as the SA Schools Act and the SA Constitution?
- ❑ The role or opportunity that SGBs give to stakeholders: Do stakeholders have a voice? Is there meaningful participation by stakeholders? How do stakeholders see their own roles?
- ❑ The running of SGBs: How regular are meetings? How well attended? Are there portfolios? What is the role of the chairperson? Are there prepared agendas? Are minutes kept and circulated?
- ❑ The functions performed by SGBs: What responsibilities are undertaken by SGBs? What are the typical items on the agenda? Who performs what functions?
- ❑ Needs and problems of SGBs: Which skills are in good supply? Which skills are lacking? Do all stakeholders have equal opportunities to participate? What is the biggest problem or need for each stakeholder group? Are there any problems surrounding the role of the principal?
- ❑ The growth of a democratic culture: What evidence is there that SGBs contribute to the establishment of democracy?

Many of these questions were covered in the investigation, but not all of them and not in clusters like the above. The researcher hopes that this list could provide a conceptual framework by which the role and functioning of SGBs could be analysed in future research.



If the process of establishing school governing bodies is viewed as part of the democratisation of South Africa, then the overall conclusion seems justified from this investigation that the introduction of SGBs in the rural areas of Northern Province has been a step forward in democracy for these communities.

One of the most clear conclusions drawn from the responses of the stakeholders interviewed was that they regarded the establishing of SGBs in a very positive light. All the schools in the sample had established SGBs. There was a wide consensus of approval among all stakeholder groups about the way that elections had been carried out. Elections were seen to have been fair and correctly carried out. There was no suggestion of any malpractice or irregularity, indicating that SGBs have been experienced as legitimate structures, at least in this region. From this the researcher concluded that the phase of implementing SGBs into the schools in the rural areas of Northern Province had been successful.

Regarding the actual running of SGBs, there was evidence of mixed success. Principals and educators seemed to have the most positive views about this, but this may be because they have traditionally had the major role in running schools and possibly are carrying on in much the same way in some cases. There was a tendency among parent representatives to complain that although the SGB had been duly elected, not much had happened since then. Parents in particular seemed to want to know more about matters of school management from which they had traditionally been excluded, such as making decisions about policy, setting up disciplinary codes, running finances and the appointment of teachers. Some indicated that meetings were not held regularly enough. Although there were a number of complaints that SGBs were not running effectively, the researcher gained the impression from a majority of those interviewed that many correct practices were nevertheless beginning to be established in a number of schools. These included working on a constitution, drawing up agendas and keeping minutes. This leads to the conclusion that these practices are evidence that SGBs are beginning to establish characteristics of a democratic culture. The more SGB members that gain experience of these practices, the more the whole community will benefit. This experience can be shared around if capacity-building takes place by mutual upliftment within the community.

Representatives from all the stakeholder groups seemed eager to participate in the process of school governance, although there were significant differences. Firstly, the most serious problem about participation seemed to be that parents were reluctant to take part on the whole. This is a cause for serious concern because they are numerically the most important group (and

are given the majority on SGBs in terms of legislation). Parents who were interviewed because they were already on SGBs were enthusiastic to take part. They wanted to share more responsibility than they were being allowed by some principals. But overall it was agreed that there was a shortage of parents willing to be nominated for election. Principals, educators and parents all put this down to apathy arising from not understanding the issues of governance, or feelings of inadequacy based on the high levels of illiteracy in rural communities. This all caused problems of poor attendance at elections or at other meetings and means that the important role of parents in sharing the educational task of the school is not being developed.

Of the other stakeholders, educators saw their role as to represent their colleagues and provide a channel to speak up for teachers' interests at SGB meetings. Educators were sometimes concerned that principals did not always communicate fully with the staff at schools about what was happening in the SGB. This could cause tension and conflict. Educators, learners and parents also questioned how items were placed on the agenda for SGB meetings. It appeared that principals often took the sole responsibility of drawing up agendas. This could lead to a bias and could exclude the chance of stakeholders to raise important matters or even to raise unpopular issues that principals want to exclude. The conclusion from the interviews was that educators felt that they definitely have experienced an increase in the power or influence they have on policy and decision-making.

Learners also welcomed the opportunity to participate in SGBs and wanted to learn more skills about governance matters. The most important finding about learners, however, was that some principals have not included learners under Grade 11 on SGBs. In some schools that only go up to Grade 10, there were not even Learner Representative Councils. This contradicts the law. The conclusion was that principals need to be made aware more clearly of the rights of all stakeholders and that learners also need to be encouraged to assert these rights as part of democratic accountability.

The study also concluded that there is a serious misunderstanding in most schools of what a non-educator is. This group of stakeholders was almost totally excluded in the sample of 10 schools. This is partly to do with people who are non-educators not knowing that they have the right to participate. But it is also because the school community as a whole did not seem to think that these people were qualified to deal with matters of governance. This is therefore also a matter for clearer communication in departmental circulars as well as through capacity-building programmes. Principals in particular should take responsibility to rectify this error.

One further conclusion reached from the investigation was that on most SGBs there is a strong gender imbalance. Females are on the whole very underrepresented. This was not a deliberate point that the study investigated, but was discovered in the process of the study.

The responses from all the interviewees showed that there was a wide range of needs for capacity-building of SGBs. Some of these needs could be deduced by the researcher, but the different stakeholders also were very clear in stating what their needs were. The greatest needs were to do with (a) the effective running of SGBs (drawing up a constitution, agendas, running meetings, keeping minutes, portfolios, the role of the chairperson and punctuality and attendance); (b) the management of finance (planning, budgeting and raising funds); and (c) sorting out the difference between governance and management functions. Both stakeholder representatives and principals were often not clear how to divide responsibilities. Control of the school's finances was a major problem area. In a number of cases, SGB members said they felt excluded. The conclusion was that principals still find it difficult to share control in areas that they have traditionally dominated. In most schools in rural areas, principals were the most educated and best qualified members of SGBs, but they were often the ones who were in danger of being too authoritarian. Principals seemed to see their roles mainly in management terms. Principals themselves did not understand that school governance requires a democratic process of sharing power. This study concluded that there is a particular need to single out principals for specially designed capacity-building or training to help them to adjust from a management pattern to one of sharing power through democratic governance.

It was a main aim of this study to try to understand the role of SGBs in rural areas. The main conclusions reached in this connection were:

- (a) The lack of parental participation is a very great problem. It stops the development of democratic governance in the local school community. Therefore it also holds up the overall development of democratic values and practices in rural communities. Illiteracy is an important part of this problem, but parents also seemed ignorant about ways they could be involved. They didn't seem to realise that every parent can make a significant contribution or that every parent has a right to be represented. Every school, especially those in rural areas, needs to analyse this problem in their own community and find ways to overcome it.
- (b) If the establishment of SGBs is meant to lead to better and more effective schools, there will not be an overall improvement in the standards of education in rural areas until parental participation is improved.

The most important conclusion is that it is an utmost priority in rural areas to launch programmes that will increase parental participation in the broader educational life of schools, and particularly in the activities of SGBs. Raising the levels of education and the whole development of backward and poor rural areas depends on this. This requires an approach that would be different from capacity-building in urban and developed communities. Rural communities need a unique and completely new approach.

There is therefore a widespread realisation that effective schools depend on good governance, but also a demand for practical help and capacity-building in the form of workshops or training manuals on all the basic tasks and responsibilities of operating school governing bodies. In the Northern Province, the researcher gained the impression that the Department is purposefully trying to provide the necessary support, but that exact needs for training should be identified more clearly and a wider range of methods for training investigated. There is indeed a readiness and a hunger for such help in the school communities of the Northern Province.

## **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The major factor in the role of the school governing body is to involve all stakeholders in the management of the school to reduce conflict and confusion with regard to the education of the children. It is apparent that the realisation of objectives of any organisation or community depends on effective planning and management. Therefore it is seriously recommended that members of the governing bodies of public secondary schools be empowered through the strategies listed below.

### **6.3.1 Involving educators with educational management in school governing bodies**

Teachers who have the necessary knowledge of management should be recognised and encouraged to be involved in school governing bodies, possibly even to the extent of using them in a training or capacity-building portfolio. Such teachers should allow parents and non-educators to work in close conjunction with them. This strategy could enable parents to become accepted as partners - and to regard themselves as such - and not as intruders in the school. Educators, especially principals, should increasingly be taught to understand that a proper

knowledge of educational management will involve the parents and learners and actively assist them to become involved in the effective management of the school.

### **6.3.2 Providing opportunities to attend workshops**

It is the responsibility of the Department of Education to provide workshops for all members of a school governing body, whether in rural and urban areas. This should be done in partnership with representatives from the SGBs who should help the Department determine what the greatest needs are in the particular school or region. Obviously needs in rural areas will differ from those in urban or developed areas. Where the Department is aware of SGBs, or groups of individual members of SGBs, that function effectively, these capable persons should be used to network or give training sessions to weaker SGBs.

### **6.3.3 Educating members of the school governing body in the management of the school**

Uninformed parents, educators, learners and non-educators should be given the opportunity to be instructed by professional people regarding the management of schools. This could be made possible by the Department of Education or by private companies and NGOs. This does imply specific provision in the province's budget, but decisions about the use of this budget could also be shared with SGBs, leading to greater accountability. Again, wherever capable people in the community are already working effectively in local SGBs, these people could be used more widely by the Department to build capacity in their own communities. The Department could actively promote such a policy of partnership, rather than keeping everything in the Department. This approach has the potential to be more cost-effective and might even seem more democratic and legitimate to the recipients of the training.

### **6.3.4 In-service training for principals and educators**

As was discussed, principals and educators as the more literate members of the school community often take a leading role in SGBs. It is important that their influence - and power - should be properly directed. Classes to provide educators and head teachers with information on governance and management skills and to help them acquire these skills could be organised during holidays or weekends. An important facet should be to teach educators how to build democratic participation by reluctant or unskilled representatives of other stakeholder groups.

### **6.3.5 Managerial courses must be introduced in various institutions**

It is clear that results with regard to the management of schools and achievement of learners in schools of the Northern Province, as well as other provinces, will be improved if principals in the various institutions attain proper management skills. Every educator should be enabled to gain knowledge of educational management. A good manager can plan, organise, control, lead and manage. Mastery of these skills will make it easier for teachers to involve members of school governing bodies in the management of the school. Such management training should include helping principals to understand the difference between their roles as managers and as participants in the shared governance of the school. Principals should specifically be helped to understand how certain practices, especially about the management of finance, can lead to the breakdown of trust and damage good governance.

### **6.3.6 Providing the basic documents to all stakeholders**

The findings of this research reflect that learners did not have access, for example, to copies of the South African Schools Act. All participants in the interview were given copies of the Act when they met with the researcher for the purpose of this research. Learners who live in the remote areas like Mangodi village, Tshidzini village, Masisi village and Muledane village found it difficult to obtain copies of the Act. Learners and parents perceive this as a means of shutting them out of the school governing body because they have no knowledge of the Act, which is only available to head teachers. Because it is advisable to create effective and harmonious working relations between learners and the governing body, it is recommended that school managers make copies available of the Act, or any suitable relevant material, to learners, parents and others members of the governing body.

### **6.3.7 Restoration of educative practice based on healthy teaching and learning**

Because learners are not aware of the details of the SA Schools Act, they do not understand the logic behind some of its clauses. It is recommended that school managers and educators should not be aggressive but should try to help learners understand the entire purpose of democratic development that lies behind the Act. The Act requires stakeholders to take part in shared governance and therefore presents an opportunity for learning and teaching. Positive attitudes in schools will breed positive results because learners will gain much when they start to comprehend the Act. In this way teaching democracy can be seen to fit in well with the purposes



and methods of Outcomes Based education. Proper ways and means must be utilised to develop learners and to prevent them from becoming hostile, alienated or disruptive, so that they can benefit to the maximum.

### **6.3.8 Including people with appropriate experience and skills to serve on governing bodies**

It is important for all governing bodies to include members with expertise and skills. The Act states that governing bodies have the power to co-opt members. It is highly recommended that every governing body of a public school use this chance for the benefit of their school and the community at large, by making sure that they invite community members with needed skills to serve - even for short periods - on the SGB. Such participation will strengthen the SGB by giving them skilled inputs, even though the co-opted member does not have voting power. This is especially applicable in rural communities where the parent body, for example, may not include the type of expertise needed for a specific decision or task. For example a person experienced in finance may be co-opted to serve on a SGB for one or two school terms to help the school organise its financial record keeping or set up a budget. When the job is done, that person's service on the SGB comes to an end, because he/she is not elected for a full term of office.

## **6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

It is recommended that, as part of this ongoing expansion of democracy, the particular role of SGBs be given much more attention. Capacity-building along the lines suggested in Chapter 5 and in the Conclusions above particularly should be researched more thoroughly. Specific focus areas would be:

- (a) raising participation levels among rural communities in school governance;
- (b) the composition of SGBs, especially with regard to gender;
- (c) capacity-building programmes specially designed for specific role-players, e.g. to empower principals to manage effectively without taking over the functions of governance, to increase effective learner participation in SGBs, and to improve the role of non-educators.

The problem does not relate to involvement of important stakeholders only, but also to equipping them with proper knowledge for performing the right duties and achieving goals. Stakeholders



who have never been involved with school management, like learners and illiterate parents, are at a loss because of lack of knowledge and skill. The extent of their inability to play a meaningful role in education and ways and means that can be used to equip them to do so need to be investigated more fully.

## **6.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The aim of this research was to investigate the role of school governing bodies in rural areas, especially in the Northern Province, with the ultimate purpose of contributing to improving the quality and effectiveness of the governance and management of public secondary schools in the Northern Province. All governing body members in public secondary schools have the potential to influence the quality of education in their schools in a profound way. They are responsible for the administration, policy-making, decision making, problem-solving and hiring of teachers in various schools and should be involved in these areas.

Because of this it is important that stakeholders should feel part of the governing body and work together with other members of the body. School managers should accept that learners would probably find the status they obtain when they are part of governing bodies as encouraging and challenging. This requires a very positive response from principals and educators. The researcher believes that this research will encourage school managers to develop good working relationships among members of the governing body and ensure that the governing body has members with vision, determination, dedication, discipline and skills in the management of the schools. The intention of this research has not been to be prescriptive but to provide a framework of ideas and an optimistic challenge to school managers for the running of the school according to the guidelines of the SA Schools Act. If all stakeholders were to adhere to the requirements of this Act, the effectiveness of the governing bodies in public secondary schools of the Northern Province would be greatly enhanced.

In this way school governing bodies can contribute to the upliftment of whole communities, especially in the historically underdeveloped rural areas, through effective schools built on the participation and interest of all stakeholders. This can also be one of the most meaningful ways to promote the growth of democratic values and practices in South Africa.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **INTERVIEW AT SCHOOLS**

#### **PARENTS, EDUCATORS, NON-EDUCATORS AND PRINCIPALS**

1. Has the new governing body been established in accordance with the instructions set out by the department?
2. What problems did you encounter in electing the school governing body and how were they overcome?
3. How do you view the role of school governing bodies?
4. Do you feel that the parent component has a meaningful role to play on the school governing body?
5. Do you feel that governing body members require training about their roles on the governing body? Has any training been done? If so, by whom was the training done and what areas were covered? If not, in what areas do you think that training is needed?
6. Has the governing body met and elected office bearers?
7. Has a new constitution been adopted for the governing body?
8. Has a code of conduct been adopted for learners?
9. Are minutes kept and do you receive a copy?
10. How do parents get to know about decisions taken at governing body meetings?

**APPENDIX B**

1. Please respond to these questions by making a cross on the answer of your choice.

1. Has a school governing body been established at this school in accordance with the South African school Act (1996)?

1.1.1. If yes, when?

1.2. Were these procedures followed when the school governing body was elected.

1.2.1. The Principal acted as the electoral officer.

1.2.2. Parents were notified 3 weeks before the election meeting

1.2.3. Separate election meetings were held for parents

Educators

Non- Educators

Learners

2. Has a Learner Representative Council been established

2.1. How many times have they met?

3. Which of these are functions of the governing body?

3.1. Leadership

3.2. Administration

3.3. Budgeting

3.4. Planing

3.5. Policy-Making

3.6. Rubber stamping decisions

3.7. Has a meeting of school governing body been held?

3.8. Has a constitution been adopted?

3.9. Has a code of conduct been adopted?

3.10. Has a language policy been adopted?